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The Medieval Globe 2.1 (2016)

Carol Symes

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, symes@illinois.edu

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THE MEDIEVAL GLOBE



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THE MEDIEVAL GLOBE

The Medieval Globe provides an interdisciplinary forum for scholars of all world areas by focusing on convergence, movement, and interdependence. Contributions to a global understanding of the medieval period (broadly defined) need not encompass the globe in any territorial sense. Rather, *TMG* advances a new theory and praxis of medieval studies by bringing into view phenomena that have been rendered practically or conceptually invisible by anachronistic boundaries, categories, and expectations. *TMG* also broadens discussion of the ways that medieval processes inform the global present and shape visions of the future.

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Copyeditor

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Editorial Assistant

Kelli McQueen

Page design and typesetting

Martine Maguire-Weltecke

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

CAROL SYMES

THE MEDIEVAL GLOBE grew out of a conference hosted by the Program in Medieval Studies at the University of Illinois, in April of 2012: "The Medieval Globe: Communication, Connectivity, Exchange." The articles in this issue are products of that meeting and, like the papers from which they grew, represent significant contributions to the study of a medieval world whose interconnected regions, peoples, and cultures we are only just beginning to understand. They also exemplify the collegiality, generosity, and critical rigor embodied by the people who made that conference an extraordinary experience.¹ Indeed, the opening dialogue on periodization, by Kathleen Davis and Michael Puett, captures the essence of the lively discussions that followed all the individual conference presentations. In it, the authors help to frame one of *TMG*'s core missions by examining two historiographical/imperial discourses in which the construct of "the medieval" has played a crucial role. The articles that follow this dialogue appear in more conventional scholarly formats, but they display a similar commitment to asking big questions, modeling portable methodologies, and looking at specific topics and problems from new angles. I hope they will inspire many readers and future contributors.

Carol Symes (symes@illinois.edu) is the founding executive editor of *The Medieval Globe*. She is the Lynn M. Martin Professorial Scholar at the University of Illinois, where she is an associate professor of history with joint appointments in medieval studies, global studies, and theatre. Her own research focuses on the history of communication technologies, the social and cultural history of western Europe from c. 1000 to 1300, and the abiding influence of medievalism in the modern world.

I In addition to the scholars whose work appears in the present issue, this conference was enriched by the contributions of Jonathan Conant, Margot Fassler, Geraldine Heng, Linda Komaroff, Eleanora Stoppino, and Nicolás Wey Gómez. Perennial thanks are due to my co-organizers, Elizabeth Oyler, D. Fairchild Ruggles, and Nora Stoppino, and (as ever) to Charles D. Wright, then Director of the Program in Medieval Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

PERIODIZATION AND “THE MEDIEVAL GLOBE”: A CONVERSATION

KATHLEEN DAVIS and MICHAEL PUETT

THE IDEA FOR this conversation emerged out of “The Medieval Globe: Communication, Connectivity, and Exchange,” a conference held at the University of Illinois in April of 2012. Its authors represent different scholarly disciplines and fields of study, and yet both presented papers that engaged with very similar issues—and that touched off a series of broader discussions among all conference participants. The editors of The Medieval Globe decided that it would be beneficial to capture the dynamics of their exchange in the form of a dialogue.

Kathleen Davis For a scholar like myself who has been dedicated to exposing the mechanisms, logic, and effects of medieval/modern periodization, a project titled *The Medieval Globe* suggests great potential but at the same time raises some serious concerns. Most obviously, the Middle Ages is a European historiographical category. Globalizing it can thus have the effect of fitting the entire world into Europe’s self-centered narrative of historical time. Moreover, the Middle Ages was constituted as exclusively European—indeed, as specifically *western* European—a process that to an important extent enabled the idea of Europe as an internally unified entity, and at the same time had the effect of excluding eastern European and non-European areas from the ancient-medieval-modern progression. Thus certain fundamental histories—such as those of politics, sovereignty, law, and philosophy—were written as moving from Athens to Rome and thence to florescence in certain power centers of Christian Europe, despite the very obvious fact that for most of what we call the Middle Ages, the engines of scholarship, not to mention economics and world trade, were in the east and south. This ancient-medieval-modern progression, tailored as it is to a narrative of western Europe, and balanced on the fulcrum of the Middle Ages, remains crucial to the exclusionary force of the “modern” today.

Had the narrative of the Middle Ages *merely* been a matter of self-centered historiography, its genesis might not pose such a problem. After all, histories are continually revised, and many narrowly conceived ideas ultimately lend themselves well to expansion or exportation. But the period concept of the Middle Ages was never merely historiographical, and it was *not* the brainchild of “Renaissance” humanists; rather, it came into being with and through colonialism, intertwined

with nationalism, primarily in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is by now well understood that European colonizers attributed “medieval” characteristics to colonized and subjugated peoples and thus denied them coeval status—that is, equal standing as human beings, whether in regard to law, trade, the capacity for self-rule, and so forth. Less well understood, and a point I consistently try to emphasize, is that the idea of a superstitious, religious, feudal, backward, irrational, static Middle Ages did not preexist the colonial subject upon which it became mapped. To the contrary, the temporalized characteristics attributed to the Middle Ages emerged from and advanced the process of identifying and ruling colonized subjects. At the same time, this process helped to underwrite European nationalist histories, as well as the entire edifice of Orientalism. The *becoming medieval* of the centuries apportioned to the Middle Ages, in other words, was a regulative process providing ideological support for practices with material, economic, political, and institutional effects—such as the extraction of wealth, environmental degradation, and destruction of social systems in conquered territories: effects that are fully intertwined with the conditions of globalization today.¹ The complex temporality of these effects cannot be accounted for within the concept of a linear unfolding of periodized historical time. Indeed, the identification of the Middle Ages as a global era preceding 1500 may have the unintended effect of not only masking crucial aspects of this history but also corroborating its narrative logic.

We are thus faced, it seems to me, with a double valence. On the one hand, we have the obvious concern that the category of “the medieval globe” organizes history according to a European rubric, leaving in place the problem of periodization and the suggestion of linear movement from medieval to modern—a temporal debacle that has long been a concern for many cultures and a central sticking point for postcolonial theory. Medievalists of course have long acknowledged this problem and have worked to ameliorate or complicate its temporal implications. Nonetheless, retaining the temporal frame of the medieval, and reconfiguring it as a global category of time, runs the risk of reconfirming the terms of the colonial, Orientalist history through which it emerged, of homogenizing the plural temporalities of global cultures, and of effacing the material effects of the *becoming* of the Middle Ages and its relationship to conditions of globalization.

On the other hand, we can certainly say that the idea of a “medieval globe” pushes against many of the major claims of colonial and nationalist history, correcting the record, making all cultures coeval, and insisting upon broad, non-Eurocentric study of the time called the Middle Ages. Medievalists have begun

1 For further discussion, see Davis, “Theory in Time.”

to investigate fine details of this history and have been putting in place the scholarship necessary for showing that the time we call the Middle Ages was global all along—not in the sense of the European imperial narrative, but in the sense of cultural connections, interdependencies, and exchange, as well as complex power relations. This new journal fosters just such a history: "*The Medieval Globe* advances a new theory and praxis of medieval studies by bringing into view phenomena that have been rendered practically or conceptually invisible by anachronistic boundaries, categories, and expectations." Such a history tends to undo the foundational narratives of European nations as well as gives space to hitherto slighted histories, and—even though it works on a periodized basis—it may even disrupt some of the premises of medieval/modern periodization. I have argued that this periodization is fundamental to dominant modes of sovereignty, and if that is correct, then "the medieval globe" might begin to imagine ways to unravel such sovereignty. If these historical stakes are explicitly addressed, it might also help to undermine the hegemony of the "modern," which—despite decades of postcolonial critique—remains a sticking point for revisionary historical analysis.

Ironically, however, such an unraveling is a principal desideratum of global capital. In this regard I often think of Saskia Sassen's point: that to be successful, globalization must engage the institutional architecture of the national state, compared to which global-level institutions and processes are relatively underdeveloped. Much of what we call globalization, she suggests, takes place within a national framework and "consists of an enormous variety of micro-processes that begin to de-nationalize what had been constructed as national—whether politics, capital, political subjectivities, urban spaces, temporal frames, or any other of a variety of dynamics and domains."² According to this scenario, globalization *needs* the de-nationalizing of that temporal frame we call the Middle Ages, the foundational past that constituted both the history and characteristics of European nations and peoples, as well as their superior, advanced relation to the people they colonized. Unpicking the attachments of a foundational Middle Ages to the national histories of northwestern Europe, and reconfiguring them as global, stretched across trade routes, enmeshed economies, and intercultural experience, is precisely what is necessary for globalization—particularly its economic forms—to have a legitimizing past. (We might think, for example, of the aggrandizement by global corporations of powers formerly exercised by sovereign states.) We medievalists, situated within the corporate university and responsive

2 Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, 1.

to its call for global studies, seem poised to deliver such a past, and we would do well, I think, to keep the inherent dangers of this larger context in mind.

I have many questions about the relevance of these issues from the vantage of Chinese historiography and politics. Does Chinese experience with the imperial and colonizing efforts of European states confirm or complicate the “colonial” history of periodization that I have described? What do contemporary Chinese historians consider the stakes of periodization, and is this an area of contention, particularly with regard to globality?

Michael Puett If the term “medieval” was created in the West as a foil against which the “modern” could be seen as arising, these terms have been all the more insidious when applied to Chinese history. When the ancient-medieval-modern narrative began being applied to China by Western scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the concern was precisely to ask why China had failed to emerge into “the modern era” as the West had. China was seen as having had a continued “medieval” period, defined by a cyclical (as opposed to progressive) view of time and a seemingly endless series of dynasties, with each dynasty simply recreating the ideas and institutions of the preceding dynasty. Under such a narrative, the impact of the West broke this cyclical history and finally brought about a beginning of modernity.

More recent historians in China, Japan, and the West have, of course, rejected such a reading. Intriguingly, however, this has resulted not so much in a rejection of the ancient-medieval-modern narrative but rather in a reconfiguration of the application of the terms to Chinese history. The goal has often been to emphasize that China had its own indigenous beginning of modernity prior to the Western impact. This by definition has entailed applying the term “modern” to periods prior to the nineteenth century, but it has often entailed as well a reconfiguration of the term “medieval.” A brief overview of the more recent ways in which the terms “ancient,” “medieval,” and “modern” have been applied to Chinese history may be helpful.

First, the “ancient” period of Chinese history—usually referred to by scholars as the “early” period. For the study of early China, scholars have often emphasized the overall parallels with Western history. Thus, the Warring States (Zhanguo 戰國) period (475–221 BCE) has often been compared with classical Greece—a period of political disunity in which philosophical debates flourished. The Han 漢 dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) has similarly often been compared with the Roman Empire—a period when eastern Eurasia came to be dominated by a single major empire just as western Eurasia was. Within these comparisons, scholars may emphasize differences (for example, the different ways the philosophical traditions developed, etc.), but the overall comparability of ancient Greece and Warring States China, as well as the Roman and Han empires, tends to be assumed.

The early medieval period is then usually seen as having begun with the fall of the Han dynasty, often portrayed as paralleling "the fall" of the Roman Empire. The ensuing period of division in China has thus often been seen as comparable to "the Dark Ages" in Europe. For the rest of this "medieval" period, however, a contrast between Europe and China is usually emphasized. The High Middle Ages is usually identified with the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907). The contrast that is commonly drawn here holds that the creation of the Tang dynasty represents the re-emergence of an empire very comparable to the Han, whereas, according to this narrative, Europe never saw the re-emergence of an empire like the Roman Empire. Thus, the common questions posed for this period from a comparative perspective are why China witnessed the reunification of the empire and why Europe did not, and what implications these developments had for the histories of the respective areas.

The next set of debates then focus on when the modern period began in China. Naitō Konan (1866–1934) argues that the shift from the medieval to the modern period began with the transition from the Tang to the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279). More recently, a number of historians have tried to argue that "early modern China" began much later, during the period from 1500 to 1800. Either way, however, one of the implications is that "modernity," or at least the beginnings of modernity, emerged indigenously in China, prior to the nineteenth-century Western impact.

In contrast to such narratives, a number of recent scholars have tried to argue that China should be studied without any reference to the ancient-medieval-modern narrative derived from studies of western Europe. But this in turn has led to a tendency to reject comparisons with European history altogether. It also raises the question of what form of periodization to utilize instead. An obvious periodization would be the dynastic cycle model, but this was (contrary to the claims of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western scholars) only one of many indigenous ways to conceptualize history in China. In some contexts it can be a useful form of periodization. In other contexts it is not.

We will return to some of the complexities of these issues below. But here I would simply like to argue that the term "modern" be dropped altogether as an analytical tool to understand any aspect of history. The term can of course be employed when people claim themselves to be "modern," but it should not ever be used as an analytical category.³

But if we refuse the term "modern," then what about "medieval?" I would in general oppose the term "medieval" precisely because it would seem to have such

³ See Symes, "When We Talk about Modernity."

little meaning outside of a contrast with “modernity.” But the idea of this journal to redefine the term in a spatial and comparative way strikes me as potentially quite powerful.

The strength that a notion of a “medieval globe” might have is that it maintains a comparative focus, but the point of the comparison is not the teleological movement toward modernity but rather a synchronic comparison of cultures across the world over a defined chronological period. The comparative focus thus shifts away from asking when and why a given culture did or did not start making the shift toward modernity and instead asks what was going on at a given period throughout the globe. Instead of being rejected, the term “medieval” is, on the contrary, resuscitated and given a new comparative meaning by being placed in a spatially comparative lens. As long as we refuse the term “modern,” and use “medieval” only in this global sense—as a resuscitated theoretical term that will allow us to look at larger global patterns during a particular period of history—it can be potentially very useful.

Kathleen Davis I am in full agreement that the term “modern” should be dropped altogether as an analytical tool to understand any aspect of history. Of course, this would be a large order indeed. The slippage between acknowledging *claims* to be “modern” and assuming *ontological status* for this “modern” has thoroughly infiltrated historiography, literary analysis, and theories of history. And, because claims to be “modern” simultaneously define a past that is left behind, this slippage likewise tends to grant ontological status to this fabricated past, no matter how absurd or cartoonish it is. As an example, we can take the description by Reinhart Koselleck (an extremely influential theorist of temporality and modernity) of the Middle Ages as locked in stasis and lacking any meaningful sense of historical change: operating under the sign of eternity, it “remains trapped within a temporal structure that can be understood as static movement.” “*Sub specie aeternitatis*,” he claims, “nothing novel can emerge.”⁴ It is precisely the cartoonish nature of this static “Middle Ages,” in fact, that has made it transferable to areas well beyond Europe, such as China. Thus the “foil” that you mention continues to circulate in well-meaning and otherwise sophisticated analyses of issues as disparate as nationalism, colonialism, international relations, secularism, gender politics, and so forth.

Indeed, the invisibility of this slippage is often crucial to arguments about these issues, entrenched as they are within disciplines established and institutionalized in the nineteenth century, and broadly expanded in the twentieth. That is to

4 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 17 and 16 (respectively).

say, the foundations of these disciplines were fully intertwined with the national and colonial projects that co-generated the Middle Ages and the colonial subject.

The insidious nature of applying the ancient-medieval-modern narrative to China thus results not merely from the suggestion that China failed to emerge into the modern era on its own, but also from the history of domination already inherent within the term "Middle Ages" and naturalized, so to speak, in the disciplines applied to China by Western scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Self-critique within these disciplines has been vigorous and productive, but it rarely even hints at the fundamental absence at their core: that is, an *untemporalized* Middle Ages from which historical consciousness and all things modern can emerge. In fact, this temporal absence is often an enabling assumption of such critique. One example (by now notorious among medievalists) is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, which builds its argument regarding the emergence of nationalism upon utterly absurd claims about the "Middle Ages." Anderson is an easy target, but the contrast between the absurdity of his claims and the continuing popularity of his book is instructive.

Today, the intensifying efforts to find an "early modern" period beyond Europe attest to the enduring power of medieval/modern periodization with respect to political and economic dominance. Naitō Konan clearly recognized the stakes involved when, in the early twentieth century, he found an early beginning of the modern for China in the transition from the Tang to the Song dynasty. Significantly, although the category "early modern" emerged in the mid-twentieth century and focused on "early modern Europe," its use escalated with the pace of decolonization. The endeavor to identify an early modern period is currently flourishing not only with respect to China but throughout the "non-West," particularly South Asia. To its credit, one goal of this endeavor is the kind of synchronic comparison of cultures across the world that you recognize as a potential strength of the notion of a "medieval globe." Yet, as you intimate and I would like to underscore, "early modern" most certainly does anticipate "the shift toward modernity." Arguments for an early modern period thus privilege the "modern" as the central category of historical analysis. Even if the point is to claim recognition for the contributions (and perhaps the precedence) of *other* cultures to recent global history, this endeavor ultimately reinscribes the teleology as well as the assumptions, priorities, and blind spots of what passes as "modernity."

Nonetheless, this "early modern" has been notoriously difficult to define. There is good reason for this difficulty, and in order to address it I would like to return to my point above that the period-concept of the Middle Ages was *not* the brainchild of Renaissance humanists. To the contrary, the narrative that the Renaissance created the Middle Ages is an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century story that displaces the work of its own colonial imaginary, settling it upon the trumped-up

rupture of the Renaissance. The time *between* the work of this displacement and this purported rupture—that is, roughly the fifteenth to the mid-eighteenth century—is what now goes under the label “early modern.” Ironically, then, endeavors to identify empirical evidence for an early modern period in order to write more global, non-Eurocentric histories rest upon a fundamentally constitutive element of the European narrative even as they efface the evidence of its contradictions.

Michael Puett I fully agree that removing “modernity” from our conceptual models is an extraordinarily difficult thing to do. Almost all of our theories and disciplines take the notion of modernity for granted. Rejecting such a concept will involve a fundamental rethinking of most of our theoretical frameworks.

One of the ways to begin such a rethinking is to look at *emic* theories from around the world. Such *emic* theories will open up new ways of thinking about the self, about history, about forms of social and political organization. But sometimes it will work the other way as well. If this attempt to take *emic* theories seriously will often direct us to new ways of thinking, it can also lead us to see the cultural specificity of many of the theories we assume to be universally valid, by revealing the highly specific contexts in which those same theories have appeared at various times in history. Many of the claims that we typically associate with the modern period have, we will see, surfaced repeatedly in history.

I mention this as an introduction to a discussion of *emic* terminologies concerning historical change in China. We mentioned above the attempts by nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western historians to place Chinese history into an ancient-medieval-modern framework. But what types of *emic* periodization existed among elites in the areas that would ultimately become China?

It is often said that, in China, one finds an assumption of time as cyclical. As noted above, this is precisely the notion of time that is seen in so many nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories as having been a widespread assumption in China, and from which “modernity” is seen as having broken. But a cyclical notion of time was only one of many understandings of temporality in China. It was certainly never an assumption. It was, rather, a view that became important at certain moments, at the state level. A brief history of the notion will be worthwhile.

The cyclical view of history was, at least in our extant records, first articulated in the early Zhou dynasty (roughly, the mid-eleventh century BCE). The Zhou claimed that their defeat of the earlier Shang dynasty was part of a larger dynastic cycle called the Mandate of Heaven (Tianming 天命). Heaven was portrayed as a moral deity that would reward good rulership and punish bad rulership. More specifically, Heaven would grant the mandate to rule to someone morally worthy. The mandate would then be handed down within the same lineage until the rulers ceased to be moral. At that point, Heaven would withdraw the mandate from the

lineage and hand it to a worthy person from another lineage, who would start a new dynasty. Under such a vision, history thus consisted of a succession of dynasties, with each dynasty beginning with a virtuous ruler and ending with a bad ruler.

In the case at hand, the last Shang ruler had been unvirtuous; Heaven thus withdrew the mandate from the Shang and bestowed it upon the Zhou. The articulations of this view appeared in the Zhou chapters of the *Book of Documents* (Shangshu 尚書), a work later thought to have been edited by Confucius. The Mandate of Heaven theory thus came to be associated with the early dynasties and with Confucius.

A very different conception of time appeared with the rise of the early empires. When the Qin created the first empire on the north China plain in 221 BCE, the First Emperor of the Qin famously did not claim to be simply creating a new dynasty—one that would presumably also eventually decline and be replaced in turn. The First Emperor, on the contrary, claimed to be bringing the dynastic cycle to an end and to instead be creating an enduring empire—one that would last for ten thousand generations. Although the Qin fell soon thereafter, the vision of creating an enduring empire most certainly did not. Similar visions continued in the ensuing Han dynasty, which also claimed to be creating an enduring empire that would break the dynastic cycle of the Bronze Age kingdoms.

A third—albeit related—view should be mentioned as well, for it too held great significance throughout later Chinese history. In the second century of the Common Era, a number of millenarian movements began to emerge. One of the most influential of these was the Celestial Masters (Tianshi 天師). The Celestial Masters held that the cosmos was created by a good deity, but that human errors had slowly brought the cosmos to the point of destruction. That deity had now taken the form of a human under the name of Laozi, in order to give further revelations. Those who followed the teachings of Laozi would survive the coming apocalypse and become the seed people for humanity in the new cosmos to come. Such an eschatological vision of time became a recurrent one in the millenarian movements that have sporadically appeared throughout Chinese history.

All three of these visions of time—the dynastic cycle model, the model of enduring empire, and the millenarian vision—became crucial throughout the middle period of Chinese history (roughly 400–1400). But it is the interrelationship between the three that is of particular interest to us. The latter two visions—the model of an enduring empire and the millenarian vision—almost perfectly parallel the temporal claims of our notion of modernity. In the first case, the explicit claim of the First Emperor was that he had broken from an earlier, cyclical past and ushered in a new era of radical innovation. Mao was, in this sense, quite correct when, in proclaiming that he was bringing to an end the world of traditional China and introducing modernity, he compared himself to the First Emperor. Simi-

larly, the millenarian visions rested upon an equally strong claim of breaking from an earlier order that held down humanity and instituting a new era of freedom and possibility.

In both of these cases, one finds a vision of time that closely parallels the temporal claims of modernity, and one that was defined against a cyclical vision that was claimed (incorrectly) to have been an overturned assumption. In short, our definition of a modernity breaking from an earlier world in which time was defined as cyclical, and in which humanity was held down by a restrictive worldview, is hardly new or uniquely Western. This helps to underline the point that using terms like “modernity” to define our analyses is inherently flawed. Ultimately, we may want to consider using terms like “imperial visions of time” and “salvationist” visions of time, thus placing our own so-called “modern” visions in comparison with related visions that have repeatedly played out throughout human history.

Kathleen Davis It is fascinating to think of the temporal models you discuss with respect to Europe, particularly when we consider the role that all three of these models have played in the generation of medieval/modern periodization. Not only, as you mention, did European historiography claim that modern Europe had left cyclical history behind, labeling it “Oriental,” but so-called “modern” histories also claim to be secular, and thus to leave eschatology behind. However, the narrative that Europe put these temporalities in its past is simply a claim of periodization itself; and like all such claims, its sorting process foregrounds certain elements and obscures others. As often noted, for example, eschatology is at the heart of “progress” as well as the concept of the suppression of the medieval by the modern. Many aspects of political temporality follow the cyclical logic that you describe. Most to the point, perhaps, is the fear that American “empire”—like the Roman Empire before it—is now waning, particularly in the face of “China rising.” Ironically, such narratives not only follow the cyclical model but also continue the venerable European tradition of *translatio imperii*—the narrative that a legitimate claim to empire was transferred from Greece, to Rome, to the power centers of western Europe.

What seems most significant to me, therefore, is the degree to which the bond between political sovereignty and the periodization of history applies to the various histories we’ve discussed. All of the temporalities that you’ve described are linked to political rule, just as the recent efforts to rewrite Chinese periodization focus on dynastic patterns. These examples bring into stark relief, I believe, the arguments I make above regarding medieval/modern periodization. Put bluntly, periodizations such as these are fundamentally and always about sovereignty. They only come to seem “real” when they are deeply embedded in historiography and related disciplines.

Your suggestion that we may want to consider using nonlinear terms like "imperial visions of time" and "salvationist" visions of time thus seems immensely promising to me, not least because it offers the potential to recognize *coexisting* temporalities. Because periodization is both exclusionary and aligned with power, its exclusions have been just as repressive of minority histories and visions of temporality within Europe as they have been beyond Europe. Indeed, the identity of "Europe" (and now also "the West") has been constituted through the exclusion both of what lies "outside" its borders and what is *other* within these borders. Scholars have been working hard, of course, to open the archive and retrieve the histories of repressed minorities or understudied regions, but these efforts have been hampered by the fundamental role of medieval/modern periodization within their disciplines. If we were to place this periodization within a long view that exposes its parochialism and its banality, and at the same time stay focused on the possibility of coexisting temporalities, we might be able to think global history in a way that does not simply serve the interests of current, "globalizing" powers. *The Medieval Globe* can certainly contribute to such a task.

We are often told that periodization is useful, even necessary to the very writing of history. This is so only to the degree that history is related to institutionalized power and the conceptions of historical time that support it. The challenge, then, is to think the idea of "the medieval globe" in a way that, as you suggest, resuscitates "medieval" as a theoretical term divorced from teleology and the spectre of an inevitable modernity. Such a "medieval" might bring to visibility multiple, coexisting conceptions of temporality that altogether defy attempts to plot them on a linear trajectory.

Michael Puett I very much agree with your emphasis on the importance of sovereignty for this forging of a medieval-modern temporality—whether that temporality is to be located in the past few centuries of European history or in earlier centuries in China. Once the medieval-modern teleology has been exposed as being simply a more recent instantiation of a very old pattern, the challenge is indeed to find ways to undertake historical analyses without falling into such a standard (and now near-dominant) way of thinking. One of the key goals for a "medieval globe" will therefore be, as you argue, to allow for a comparative focus on the forms of temporality that were at play during this period of history without resorting to the dangerous teleologies we have noted.

And let me also underscore your earlier point about the potential dangers of how we explore global networks of trade—a key component of the "early modern" paradigm. Even if finally removed from a claim of "early modernity"—finally removed, in other words, from a claim that these global networks of trade were breaking down earlier, more insular societies and moving us toward a modern,

globalized world—we need to be careful that we are not implicitly celebrating these networks for precisely this very reason. In other words, we risk falling into the danger of the “early modernity” paradigm even if we have dropped the term. And we need, as you argued powerfully, to be self-conscious that the current celebration of networks of trade is not implicitly playing into and thus helping to legitimate the current celebrations of globalization in neo-liberal economics.

But, having mentioned these dangers, let me again return to the positive aspects. Rescuing the term “medieval,” freeing it from its status as that which came before and had to be broken from in order for modernity to begin, and placing it within a global context allows for the possibility of undertaking truly comparative and perhaps even connective work for a period that has received relatively little such attention. For the study of China, it would be wonderful to have studies that would be fully comparative and yet not based upon questions of when China did or did not start becoming modern.

Watching the field of global medieval studies develop will be tremendously exciting. I have no doubt that this period—and thus world history in general—will look very different once it has been placed in a comparative context and has been rescued from its definition as that which preceded modernity.

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Kathleen Davis (kathleendavis@uri.edu) is a professor of English at the University of Rhode Island and writes on issues of temporality, periodization, sovereignty, and secularization. The author of *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), she is currently working on a project titled “The Making of Secular Time.”

Michael Puett (puett@fas.harvard.edu) is the Walter C. Klein Professor of Chinese History in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University. He is the author of *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford University Press, 2001) and *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2002).

Abstract The period categories “medieval” and “modern” emerged with—and have long served to define and legitimate—the projects of western European imperialism and colonialism. The idea of “the medieval globe” is therefore double edged. On the one hand, it runs the risk of reconfirming the terms of the colonial, Orientalist history through which the “medieval” emerged, thus homogenizing the plural temporalities of global cultures and effacing the material effects of the *becoming* of the Middle Ages and its relationship to conditions of globalization. On the other hand, “the medieval globe” brings to bear a comparative focus that does not ask when and why a given culture did or did not start making the shift toward modernity, but rather asks what was going on at a given period throughout the globe. Such a history might undo the foundational narratives of European nations as well as give space to hitherto slighted histories. This conversation approaches the complexities of this problem from two perspectives: that of a scholar in European studies and a scholar in Chinese studies.

Keywords periodization, medieval globe, globalization, China, historiography, narrative, *translatio imperii*, Middle Ages, modernity.

IDENTITY IN FLUX: FINDING BORIS KOLOMANOVICH IN THE INTERSTICES OF MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN HISTORY

CHRISTIAN RAFFENSPERGER

MEDIEVAL HISTORY IS not a static discipline. It is constantly changing to incorporate new methods and new challenges to existing frameworks. The critique of the concept of feudalism over the last forty years is just one example among many.¹ However, some paradigms are more resistant to change, even in twenty-first-century scholarship. Two of these are the nation and the family, especially the dynastic family. The baggage of nationalism is still being carried in East European studies more broadly, and in medieval historiography in particular. Modern nation-states are still using the history of great medieval dynasties as a way to reinforce their claims to sovereignty and territory. This is especially true in modern eastern Europe,² but it is also applicable to western Europe as well.³ Moreover, historians writing about all of Europe implicitly reinforce these modern claims to medieval identity by projecting modern nation-states back into the

I would like to thank the anonymous readers of this piece for their suggestions, as well as my co-contributors, Elizabeth Lambourn and Carl Nappi, for their collegial comments. Special thanks go to Carol Symes who suggested (strongly) that I reconceptualize the article in its entirety and devoted much time and effort to editing.

1 The original critique began forty years ago in Brown, "Tyranny of a Construct." For a recent overview of this issue, see Abels, "The Historiography of a Construct."

2 Serhii Plokhy has observed "that perceptions of the premodern Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, both in their homelands and in the West, are still shaped by the views of national historians and the paradigms they created": *Origins of the Slavic Nations*, ix. In a similar vein, Przemysław Urbańczyk has offered that "despite many changes in geopolitical circumstances and internal situations, the patriotic-nationalistic sentiments are still present in discussions of the early medieval history in East Central Europe": "Early State Formation," 141.

3 Patrick Geary, in *Myth of Nations*, has investigated the same concept's hold in western Europe. However, the status and stakes of scholarship on western medieval Europe is categorically different within the American academy. Someone who specializes in the eleventh-century Loire valley is considered "a medievalist," while someone who focuses on eleventh-century Kiev is classified as a "Russianist" or "Ukrainianist." This horizontal versus vertical disciplinary dichotomy represents a major hurdle to viewing the medieval world as it actually was; hence the mission of *The Medieval Globe*. See also the dialogue between Kathleen Davis and Michael Puett in this issue.

past: “medieval Russia,” “medieval Poland,” “medieval France,” and so on. In this context, families are typically portrayed as stable, monolithic patrilineal entities that descend from an identifiable (semi- or totally mythical) forbear whose line continues for hundreds of years. Those dynasties (e.g., Piast for Poland, Riurikid for Rus’, Árpád for Hungary) are then used as stand-ins for the nation, especially in the absence of other national designators, such as modern governmental institutions, borders, or ideas of nationhood.

This article challenges both of those categories, the nation and the dynasty, through a case study focused on a historical actor who had no nation and no family—at least not as recognized by contemporary chroniclers or modern historians. And because he has been left out of medieval history, his life is an instructive one, shedding light on the ways that medieval politics and medieval families were bound together: it reveals that historical actors situated themselves not in linear dynasties but within kinship webs that allowed them to create situational kinship networks to aid them in times of need.⁴ Reconstructing and analyzing these networks is difficult, and it complicates our view of the medieval world in important ways. To take just one brief, general example: the Riurikids and Piasts were intermarried to a great extent during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the members of these families were intimately involved in one another’s affairs, most clearly seen in the military sphere. But the history of these interactions, as exemplified by the phrasing of the previous sentence, is written by focusing first on one, then the other, either Riurikid (Rus’/Russia/Ukraine) or Piast (Poland). The interconnectivity of those families, however, makes it clear that these individuals were instead focused on their own affairs, utilizing whichever members of their kinship web were most advantageous to them at a given time, regardless of modern ideas of dynasty or nation. Such a history, of an individual actor situated in a kinship web constructing situational kinship networks, is more difficult to grasp but more accurate, and potentially more interesting, than relying on reified modern paradigms read back into the past.

Our unlikely protagonist is one Boris Kolomanovich, whose life of unfulfilled ambitions will illustrate the problems inherent in the way we currently discuss medieval kingdoms and families, and whose fate invites us to better understand the ways that individuals utilized, or constructed, their family dynamic: that particular combination of politics and family ties that helped medieval kingdoms negotiate their relationships with one another and the world around them. Boris was an elite male, the son of a king and queen, and as such should be fodder for

⁴ The key concepts of kinship webs and situational kinship networks will be discussed and explained in greater detail below.



Map 1. The World of Boris Kolomanovich. Map created by the author.

traditional top-down history writing. But Boris rarely appears as an actor in either primary or secondary sources.⁵ This is part of what makes him an unlikely protagonist, and is central to the first question raised by the study of his life: what causes Boris to fall between the cracks? The question has several answers, but three are important for our purposes. First, Boris cannot be seen as affiliated with a modern nation-state. He is not Hungarian, or Russian, or Ukrainian, and thus those who choose to write about modern nation-states (projected back into the past) rarely include him.⁶ Second, he does not ever succeed in his ambitions, or in obtaining his birthright as he conceptualized it: to become king.⁷ Kings, even bad ones, get space in history books, but failed kings often do not. Third, he is not the subject

⁵ Andrew Urbansky is the sole example I have found of a historian who integrates Boris into a synthetic explanation of events: see *Byzantium and the Danube Frontier*. There is only one study, nearly a century old, devoted entirely to him and his mother: Rozanov, "Evfimiia Vladimirovna i Boris Kolomanovich."

⁶ E.g., Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*; Martin, *Medieval Russia*; Engel, *Realm of St. Stephen*. There are a large variety of such works to choose from, and I have selected only a representative three in which Boris occupies less than a single page. All are by scholars I think highly of.

⁷ Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII*, 34–35. I have attempted to cite English language translations of medieval primary sources, or at least note them, where available to make this article as accessible as possible to the largest audience. English serves an acceptable lingua franca for scholars who work on medieval Europe, both in East and West.

of a chronicle or even the object of hatred of a chronicler. Because of points one and two, Boris only appears in our sources when he interacts with those who are the subjects of such chronicles: luckily for us, since in his attempt to actualize his dream of rule, Boris traveled through a large swathe of the medieval world, including the kingdoms of Rus', Poland, and Hungary, and the German and Byzantine empires (Map 1).⁸ So to write the story of Boris, and to complicate the histories of kingdoms and dynasties, we need to reconstruct his movements and analyze them for what they can tell us about family dynamics and situational kinship roles. Our larger goal is to fashion a new vocabulary that better articulates the ways that medieval people constructed their own medieval globe.

Situational Kinship and Kinship Webs

This new vocabulary for discussing and better understanding medieval family dynamics begins with two terms: kinship webs and situational kinship networks. These two terms set up a framework that allows for a less anachronistic discussion of medieval relationships and, moreover, provides one that is portable throughout much of the medieval world. Their explication here is a necessary first step in laying the foundation for the case study of Boris Kolomanovich.

Traditionally, medieval European dynasties are envisioned as patrilineal, such that each male ruler is descended from the prior male ruler whose descent is traced back to the eponymous founder of the dynasty. In Rus', for example, Volodimer the Great (r. 980–1015) was succeeded by Iaroslav the Wise (sole ruler, 1036–54) who was succeeded by Iziaslav Iaroslavich (r. 1054–68, ca. 1069–73, ca. 1077–78). They were all members of the Riurikid—or, more accurately, the Volodimerovich—family and were grandfather, father, and son respectively.⁹ What such a depiction does not convey is the horizontal breadth of the Volodimerovich family itself, since there are no siblings or in-laws present in this simplified picture, and since this larger, more inclusive family model would challenge the modern conception of medieval families as patrilineal institutions with fixed identities.

As the case of Boris Kolomanovich reveals, families were actually kinship webs that spread horizontally as well as vertically. Marital families were just as

⁸ This map does not attempt to show the borders of these kingdoms, only major cities. Medieval polities did not have well delineated borders and their territorial complexity cannot be represented in conventional ways. Additionally, the names of these polities are as open to discussion as the names of their ruling families. To take just one well-known example, Byzantium would have been described as “Rome” or the “Roman Empire” in contemporary Greek primary sources.

⁹ My use of the term Volodimerovich follows the work of Ostrowski, “Systems of Succession.”

important as natal families in finding allies, and in-laws were often the first, not the second, source of such allies when one competed with one's own natal kin. Thus, while named dynasties like the Volodimerovichi, Piasts, and Árpáds may be referenced for convenience, it is more useful to situate each individual at the center of his or her own web and to track his or her shifting relationships with other family members.

These kinship webs, though, were enormous and often spanned medieval Europe—and beyond. As such they were ineffective as the sole source of identity or support; rather, they served as the base from which subsequent relationships could be built.¹⁰ To create effective alliances, individuals had to select and engage with a subset of that web at various times: the situational kinship network. The purpose of the situational kinship network was to recruit a group of allies, all or most of whom were part of the larger web, to assist in accomplishing a particular goal. Kinship may have been the *sine qua non* for belonging to, or joining, a situational kinship network; but to recruit participants to further a given plan, one had to show that there would be mutual benefit. Such benefits ranged from the very tangible (such as new sources of wealth) to the highly intangible (such as influence in exchange for assistance); in each case, all of the parties involved in a situational kinship network shared a common goal. The situational kinship network might therefore serve to break up one's kinship web for a brief time. With the construction of any situational kinship network, an individual might cast a member of his family as X not Y, so as to engage in conflict with Y (who was no longer part of the family at that moment). Such compartmentalization made it much easier to pursue intra-kin conflicts, which constituted the majority of royal conflicts throughout medieval Europe. Finally, situational kinship networks were creations of the moment. They were not designed to be lasting alliances or to permanently divide kin from kin, but to serve a particular purpose. Once the shared objective of the situational kinship network had been reached (e.g., the particular battle won or city taken), the kinship web was re-woven and new situational kinship networks could be created for a new purpose.¹¹ Such new situational kinship networks often involved family members who only recently had been on opposite sides of a conflict. The malleability of relationships within the larger kinship web helps to demonstrate the efficacy of situational kinship as a tool for analyzing medieval family interactions—as will be shown in the case study here of Boris Kolomanovich.

10 These webs spanned confessional boundaries in the Christian world as well, at least through the twelfth century: Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 47–114.

11 A larger discussion of situational kinship networks forms part of my forthcoming book, *Ties of Kinship*.

Family and Identity

Identity politics—specifically those related to the privileging of a group's shared identity in order to create or increase a sense of group unity—is not just a modern phenomenon. The major category of modern discourse for medieval royalty is the dynasty. However, as noted above, when traced solely patrilineally this represents an ahistorical approach to the everyday interconnectivity of the medieval world displayed here. In recent decades, the study of the medieval world has evolved to include women, and has especially privileged the roles of elite women.¹² But even with that advance, the modern historiographical conception of the medieval family is still arranged around a patrilineal line, and children are designated as part of their father's line solely. This leads, ultimately, to an easy identification of family/dynasty with nation—and anachronism creeps back into the picture. Instead, it must be remembered that medieval ruling families created and maintained power by forging relationships that stretched across and beyond Europe, constrained by religion (sometimes) and politics, but not by modern boundaries read back into history.¹³ The result was a tangled web of relations from which it was, and is, impossible to extract a single individual or to tell a single story. This very complexity is useful for illustrating the realities of medieval kinship.

In the example used here, Boris, the son of Koloman, was the progeny of a Volodimerovichi woman and an Árpád man (See Figure 1). Traditionally, for modern historians, he would be labeled an Árpád, thus tracing his line of descent through his father (though there were plenty of contemporary claims being based on matrilineal descent at this same time).¹⁴ Alternatively, one could say that he was half-Volodimerovichi and half-Árpád. And yet the picture is even more complicated than that. Koloman's father was an Árpád (again, taking his father's identity as his own, for the sake of discussion), and Koloman's mother was the daughter of a German count (probably).¹⁵ The father of Boris's mother, Evfimiia, has been

12 Two edited collections will point interested readers to some relevant studies: Parsons, *Medieval Queenship*; Goldy and Livingstone, *Writing Medieval Women's Lives*.

13 I have shown elsewhere that the traditionally envisioned ecclesiastical divide in medieval Europe did not affect dynastic marriages in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: *Reimagining Europe*, 70–114, 136–85.

14 The civil war in England between Empress Mathilda and Count Stephen of Blois might be the best known example, as both candidates were claiming the throne through a female connection. In Mathilda's case, it was herself, as daughter of King Henry I; in Stephen's, his claim was as the king's nephew, through his mother, the king's sister.

15 There is a great deal of confusion as to the parentage of Koloman and his brother Almos, as they were most likely born prior to the ca. 1075 marriage of their father Geza I and a certain Synadena from Byzantium. Sophia of Loon was, probably, Géza's first wife, but little is

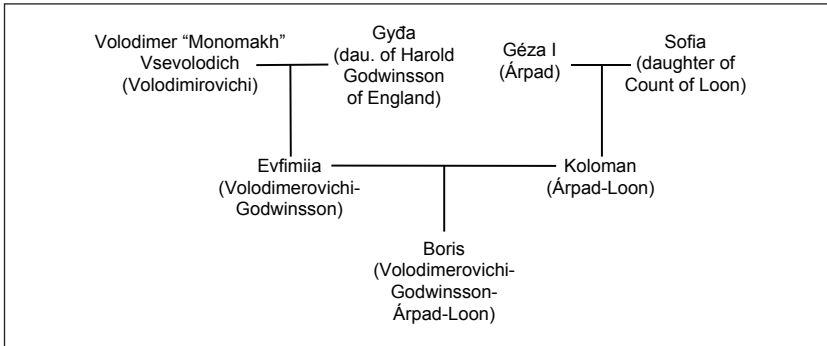


Figure 1. Boris's Ancestors and Their Families

designated as a member of the Volodimerovichi (with the same caveat above), and her mother was Gyða, daughter of Harold Godwinsson, the last Anglo-Saxon king of England.¹⁶ The picture only gets more complicated as one goes back in time and tries to trace the “identity” of each of these individuals. Modern discussions of these families are often distilled into “lines” for convenience but also to privilege the identity of the patrilineal family. For example, the Árpád line, with all children born to an Árpád father and labeled as Árpáds, can be abstracted from this web and equated with “Hungary.”¹⁷ But the picture in Figure 1 is much more complex, and in that complexity is buried a host of competing identities that each individual could adopt and exploit over his or her lifetime.

Anachronism must be dealt with when discussing these various family lines. Often these are not solely modern creations: often they are later medieval constructions that get read back into earlier periods and accepted by later historians. To take just one example, the royal family of the kingdom of Rus’ is known in modern historiography as the Riurikids, named after the eponymous (but mythical) founder of the dynasty, a ninth-century Viking warrior who was allegedly invited to take control of the lawless people of what would become Rus’.¹⁸ In other words,

known about her. The best source for the Árpád genealogy does not even mention her: Mór, *Az Árpádok*.

16 See the entries for Boris Kolomanovich, Evfimiia Vladimirovna, and others on “Russian Genealogy” <genealogy.obdurodon.org> (accessed April 26, 2015).

17 Most any study focused on one particular medieval kingdom or family does this, wittingly or otherwise. For the Árpád example, see the otherwise excellent book by Engel, *Realm of St. Stephen*.

18 The story of Riurik’s arrival and the foundation of Rus’ is told in *Russian Primary Chronicle*, CE 862.

Riurik is a convenient historical invention designed to legitimize a dynasty, but only at a much later point in time. So the Riurikid name is an anachronism in our period but has continued to be used by historians, as it has become a commonplace descriptor for this family.¹⁹ The members of this family, in the period with which I am concerned, all self-consciously traced their descent not to Riurik, but to Volodimer Sviatoslavich, the first Christian ruler of Rus'. As such, I have used the descriptor "Volodimerovichi" for this group, as it more accurately reflects how they thought of themselves.²⁰ Though this is just one example, the same discussion can be had for each of the other groups mentioned here,²¹ leaving us with an equal number of problems with attempts to use dynasties as building-blocks of medieval politics as with the anachronistic reliance on retroactive kingdoms.

A Reconstructed Life of Boris Kolomanovich

As already noted, the life of Boris Kolomanovich does not conform to many of the normative categories of medieval or modern historiographies, and therefore seems very odd. However, for the purposes of illustrating the dynamics of situational kinship ties within a larger kinship web—as well as for breaking down notions of medieval European history as the history of modern nations read back into the past—it is ideal. Below I offer a sketch of Boris's life derived from a variety of sources, in an effort to identify the kinship web(s) within which he figured and to show how he constructed situational kinship networks as a way to advance his individual goals. Implicit in this story of one man is a larger lesson: that the linear story of one nation or kingdom cannot contain the manifold actors and events that are relevant to the history of that kingdom.

Boris's Parentage and Childhood

Boris's father was Koloman, son of Géza I, *pater familias* of the Árpád family and king of the Hungarians (Figure 2).²² Koloman ruled from his capital at Esztergom on the Danube, and his realm was a powerful one, negotiating its difficult position between the German and Byzantine empires by building a web of relations that

19 The genealogical study of the dynasty by Baumgarten (1927) is still extensively cited: "Généalogies et mariages occidentaux."

20 This follows the work of Ostrowski, "Systems of Succession."

21 Both Piast and Árpád were eponymous founders of their respective dynasties, for example.

22 There is some dispute about Boris's parentage, in particular from the one source praising his opponents and rivals; but most sources identify him as the son of Koloman. See *Chro-*

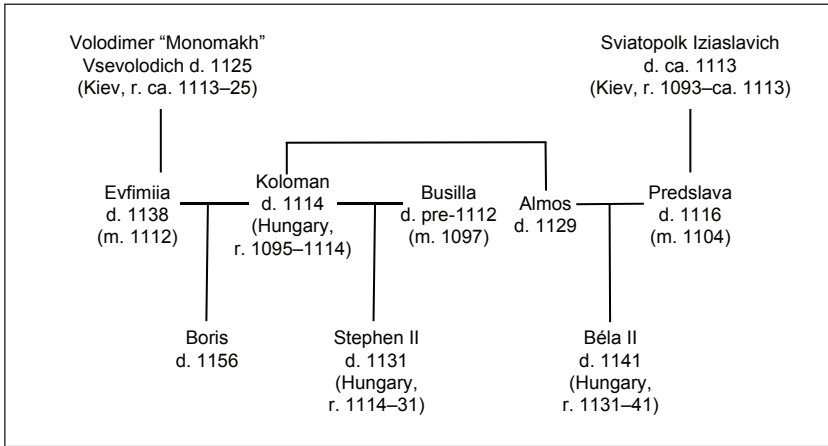


Figure 2. Boris's Immediate Natal Family

encompassed most of the European ruling families. Boris's mother was Evfimiia, daughter of Volodimer "Monomakh," one of the most senior (and powerful) members of the Volodimerovichi clan of Rus'; and at the time of Evfimiia's marriage to Koloman in 1112, Volodimer was heir apparent to the throne of Kiev, capital of Rus' (Figure 2).²³ As of 1113, Volodimer Monomakh became the ruler of Kiev and thus controlled Rus', from the territory of Novgorod in the north to the frontier with the steppe a few days south of Kiev, and from beyond Vladimir in the west, to an ever-expanding border in the east: the largest territorial kingdom in Europe at this time.

These were powerful parents, from powerful families, and the circumstances of his birth should have laid the foundation for a highly privileged life for Boris. But beyond the power these families exercised lies a complex story about the nature of dynastic marriages and the politics involved. Koloman had been married previously, to Busilla, the daughter of the Norman ruler of Sicily, Roger I.²⁴ Busilla had died shortly before 1112, along with their firstborn son, Ladislaus.²⁵ Koloman had

nica de gestis Hungarorum, 132; Cosmas of Prague, "Cosmae Chronicon Boemorum," CE 1132; and Otto of Freising, *Two Cities*, book 7:21. For two analyses of this marriage and its sources, see Rozanov, "Evfimiia Vladimirovna i Boris Kolomanovich"; and Raffensperger, *Ties of Kinship* (forthcoming).

²³ *Ipat'evskaia letopis*, ed. by Koshelev (hereafter cited as *Hypatian Chronicle*), CE 1112.

²⁴ The name of Roger's daughter is unknown, but she has historically been referred to as Busilla or Buxilla; see Mór, *Az Árpádok*, 222. Makk has recently suggested that her name was Felicia: *Árpáds and the Comneni*, 126.

²⁵ Mór, *Az Árpádok*, 222.

one remaining son from his marriage to Busilla, Stephen (later Stephen II), but he also had a power-hungry younger brother, Almos, who had a son of his own, Béla (later Béla II). Koloman and Almos had sparred for much of Koloman's rule, and Koloman may have been concerned about the succession of his line over Almos's. To address this, he arranged another marriage for himself with the daughter of Volodimer Monomakh to create a powerful kinship tie, as well as to produce heirs. This kinship tie worked to offset that of Almos, who was married to another of the Volodimerovichi, the daughter of Sviatopolk Iziaslavich, then ruler of Kiev and Volodimer Monomakh's chief rival in Rus' (see Figure 2). Thus, even prior to his birth, Boris was already embroiled in this web of kinship connections, the product of a marriage arranged to tie one branch of the Árpáds to one branch of the Volodimerovichi, in order to oppose another branch of the Árpáds tied to another branch of the Volodimerovichi.

Shortly before Boris's birth in 1113, Koloman repudiated Evfimiia and she was sent home to Rus', where Boris was born.²⁶ Though there has been some speculation about the reasons for the repudiation, notably that Koloman must have denied fathering the child, multiple sources record that Boris's father was Koloman.²⁷ Boris certainly identified himself as such throughout his life, and his main goal was to succeed his father as ruler of the Árpáadian realm of Hungary. Nevertheless, Koloman's repudiation of Evfimiia, and the failure of that marriage alliance, led Koloman to take more drastic steps to preserve his rule and promote that of his son Stephen. In 1113, the same year as the repudiation, Koloman had his brother Almos and his nephew Béla blinded, castrated, and committed to a monastery.²⁸ Each of these actions individually would have made Almos and Béla ineligible for rule, and their combination was strategically potent. Blinding was a well-known punishment, especially in the Roman world of Constantinople, and was used as a humane way to punish usurpers without killing them.²⁹ The removal of their eyes signaled that they were no longer bodily whole and were thus incapable of rule. Castration meanwhile, was intended to prevent them from producing heirs to their line.³⁰

26 *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum*, 132.

27 Cosmas of Prague, "Cosmae Chronicon Boemorum," CE 1132; and Otto of Freising, *Two Cities*, book 7:21. For the allegation of adultery, see *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum*, 132.

28 *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum*, 133; Cosmas of Prague, *Chronicle of the Czechs*, book 3:43; "Annales Posonienses," CE 1117. John Kinnamos mentions blinding as a tool of the Hungarians in regard to Almos, in particular, but there is no mention of the castration: *Deeds*, book 1:9. Béla remained at the Benedictine monastery of Pécsvárad even after his father went to Byzantium: Urbansky, *Byzantium and the Danube Frontier*, 40.

29 Lascaratos and Marketos, "Penalty of Blinding."

30 *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum* (133) records that the man ordered to castrate the young

Committing a rival, especially a younger brother, to a monastery also had a long heritage in medieval Europe, with Pepin the Short's treatment of the Merovingians in the eighth century as perhaps the most famous example. Despite these tactics' apparent lack of success in this case, since Béla eventually did succeed to the throne and produce offspring, these actions had enormous symbolic value that would have cast doubt upon Almos and Béla and also required them, or their chroniclers, to explain away these actions.³¹ Nevertheless, the punishments themselves speak to the strength of Koloman's resolve to preserve the inheritance for his son Stephen, and his line in the face of a rival younger brother. His first attempt to preserve his family's rule had been to craft a marital alliance, while his second attempt was maiming his own close kin, a clear statement of the relative importance of marital alliances versus that of blood relations.

At Koloman's death Stephen II, his son by Busilla, succeeded him. Stephen, too, was worried about Almos and Béla, despite his father's efforts, and so he worked to neutralize Almos's alliance with the Volodimerovichi. He did this by repeatedly creating situational kinship networks with Almos's brother-in-law Iaroslav Sviatopolchich against Volodimer Monomakh, themselves antagonistic kin.³² In this way he fostered goodwill with the family of Sviatopolk Iziaslavich (a key figure in Almos's kinship web) and prevented Almos from calling on this connection to create a situational kinship network to use against Stephen. It is also possible to imagine that Volodimer Monomakh's position as Evfimiia's father lent another motive to Stephen's attacks upon him. In fact, the *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum* specifically ascribes to Stephen this motive for supporting Iaroslav: "King Stephen, wishing to avenge the injury done to his father, King Coloman, promised the Duke his assistance."³³

Stephen was right to be worried about Almos, but it seems that his strategic counter-alliance with the Volodimerovichi had worked in his favor, since when Almos next revolted against him in 1125, he did so by drawing on a different section of his kinship web and fleeing to Constantinople, where he received help from Emperor John II Komnenos—and not from his wife's kin in Rus'. Emperor John II

Béla was unable to bring himself to do so, and instead gave the king a dog's testicles in place of the young boy's.

31 Ibid.

32 There are multiple examples of Hungarian support for Iaroslav in the various chronicles; see, e.g., the *Hypatian Chronicle*, CE 1118 and 1123. Volodimer Monomakh was also the father of Evfimiia, Stephen's former stepmother, though whether this played into his calculations or not is unknown. It is, perhaps, hard to imagine that it did not play some role in his thinking.

33 *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum*, 134.

was himself married to an Árpád princess, the daughter of Koloman's predecessor Ladislaus, and Almos utilized this tie to create a situational kinship network with him.³⁴ The two, John and Almos, fought with Stephen II several times at the end of the 1120s, until Almos's death in 1129,³⁵ which brought an end to the conflict. Béla had, it appears, stayed in one monastery or another without leaving the kingdom the whole time, which is where he was found by Stephen II and named as heir in 1131, shortly before Stephen's death.³⁶ Though we have no source that explains this choice, Stephen had no sons of his own, and it appears that he would rather have his cousin (though son of his mutinous uncle) as his heir, rather than his own repudiated half-brother Boris. Indeed, this succession may have prompted Boris's initial campaign to gain the throne of Hungary.

Boris Attempts to Claim His Birthright

It has been assumed that Boris spent his childhood in Rus' with his mother;³⁷ but he does not appear in any contemporary sources until the early 1130s, and when he does appear, it is as a fully grown political actor. The succession of Béla II to the Árpáadian throne was a slight to Boris as the son of Koloman, and this most likely motivated his first attempt to claim it for himself in 1132, when he was eighteen or nineteen years old.³⁸ Boris's bid for power was directly preceded by the extension of his kinship web: at some point prior to that year, he had married Judith, the daughter of the Piast ruler of Poland, Bolesław III (See Figure 3).³⁹ This created a

34 Kinnamos, *Deeds*, book 1:9. Niketas Choniates also discusses these events, though with less specificity: *Historia*, c. 17. John II Komnenos was married to Piroška/Irene, the daughter of Ladislaus; Ladislaus had been Koloman's uncle and predecessor. See Mór, *Az Árpádok*, 210–12; Magdalino, "Empire of the Komnenoi," 631.

35 *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum*, 135; Magdalino, "Empire of the Komnenoi," 631; Magoulis, in Chomiates, *Historia*, n. 43.

36 *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum*, 135; Engel, *Realm of St. Stephen*, 50.

37 Rozanov, "Evfimiia Vladimirovna i Boris Kolomanovich," 587.

38 The general practice of the Árpáds had been lateral, or collateral, succession with only a few deviations (or attempted deviations); thus Koloman's children should all have ruled before the succession passed to Koloman's younger brother's family. John Kinnamos discusses the inheritance system of the Árpáds, specifically noting it as lateral, when he discusses the inheritance of Géza II: *Deeds*, book 5:1. It is also worth noting, as motivation, the killing of the nobles who had supported the blinding of Béla: a deed ascribed to his wife Elena, and which the *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum* (136–37) cites as the cause of the Hungarian nobles' invitation to Boris in the first place.

39 The "*Velikaia Khronika*" o Pol'she, hereafter cited as *Polish "Great Chronicle"* (ed. Shchaveleva, trans. Popov, c. 27) records that one of Bolesław's daughters married a son of Koloman.

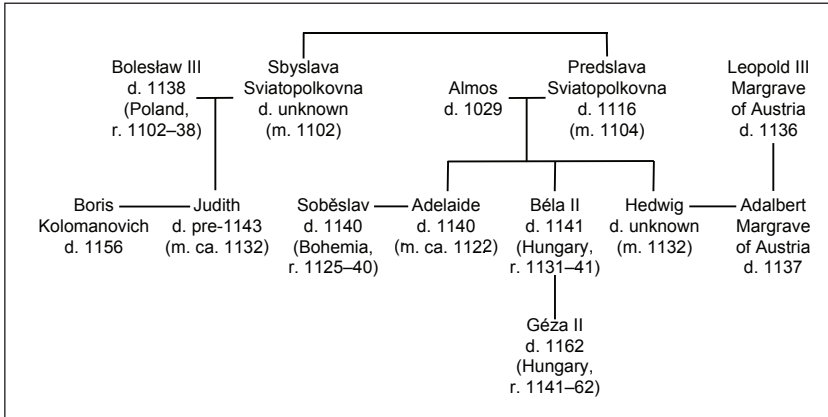


Figure 3. Boris's Allies and Enemies in 1132

new opportunity for further situational kinship alliances, to support the claim for what he apparently viewed as his natal rights. This dynastic marriage itself was a departure for Bolesław in terms of familial relationships, as his first wife had been a daughter of Sviatopolk Iziaslavich, a sister of Almos's wife Predslava; he was thus the uncle of Boris's rival cousin, Béla II (Figure 3).⁴⁰ Such a change illustrates the complicated nature of situational kinship networks, as well as Bolesław's apparent acceptance of Boris's birthright, and his claim to the Hungarian throne.⁴¹ The kinship web that encompassed Bolesław (and all medieval rulers) connected him to a host of mutually antagonistic people and causes. Family ties, because of this, did not mean a guarantee of immediate assistance. Instead, they were often simply the foundation for requesting assistance, and were superseded by the active construction of situational kinship networks to create alliances for a particular cause. Situational kinship networks allowed for a medieval realpolitik in which brothers-in-law might support each other in one campaign, but find themselves on opposite sides of another campaign a few years later, while all along being part of the same

Balzer in his *Genealogia Piastów* (Table 3) has subsequently suggested that this was instead Géza II, son of Béla II. However, the majority of sources that discuss Géza II only mention his marriage to Evfrosiniia Mstislavna (one of the Volodimerovichi), and all of his known children are assumed to be hers. Thus, we are left with a historical conundrum due to a lack of specific evidence. Mór (*Az Árpádok*, 257–80) discusses this marriage as at least a possibility.

⁴⁰ *Lavrent'evskaia letopis'*, edited by Koshelev (hereafter cited as *Laurentian Chronicle*), CE 1102. See also Długosz, *Annales seu cronicae incliti*, 210–11.

⁴¹ It should also be acknowledged that while Bolesław's motives are unknown, his actions indicate his acceptance of Boris's claims, if only to advance his own agenda.

kinship web. Bolesław understood that by marrying his daughter to Boris, he was choosing a side against Béla II and potentially involving himself, his family, and his kingdom in a war for the Hungarian throne. This was not an uncommon position for the Piasts to be in: Bolesław III and his Piast predecessors had already demonstrated ambitions to influence the Árpád succession.⁴²

Béla II responded by activating a situational kinship network of his own. He called upon his brother-in-law Soběslav, the Přemyslid ruler of the Bohemians, who was married to Adelheid, Béla's sister (See Figure 3).⁴³ Soběslav had inherited the throne in 1125 but had had an eventful life of struggle before that, with his older brother Vladislav. That struggle was often supported by Bolesław III,⁴⁴ who was Soběslav's nephew and cousin.⁴⁵ This was an odd change of kinship allegiances for Soběslav and reflects the utility of situational kinship networks, as opposed to the static, linear relationships reflected in genealogical charts. Béla, like Boris, also expanded his kinship web, marrying his other sister, Hedwig, to Adalbert, the son of Margrave Leopold III of Austria (see Figure 3).⁴⁶ This new relationship tied Béla into the powerful Babenberg family of Leopold III and allowed him to create situational kinship networks not just with Adalbert but with other members of that larger kinship web.⁴⁷

Thus, 1132 saw the clash between these two situational kinship networks: Bolesław III and his son-in-law Boris led an army against Béla II for control of the Árpáadian kingdom. Béla's allies included his new brothers-in-law as well as other

42 Bolesław's namesake, Bolesław II, had done the same, backing one line of the Árpáds against another in a succession battle during the second half of the eleventh century.

43 Soběslav's role seems to have been an offensive one, attacking the Poles from the west while they were occupied with the Hungarians to their south. See Cosmas of Prague, "Cosmae Chronicon Boemorum," 216; and "Annales Cracovienses Breves," CE 1133. For the marriage, see Cosmas of Prague, *Chronicle*, book 3:52.

44 One of the highlights of which is the appeal that Bolesław writes to one uncle/cousin (Vladislav) on behalf of another uncle/cousin (Soběslav). See Cosmas of Prague, *Chronicle*, book 3:41.

45 Vratislav II of Bohemia had a daughter Judith by his first wife (an Árpád), who was married to Władysław Herman of Poland, Bolesław III's father. Vratislav II had Soběslav, and his elder brother Vladislav, by his second wife (a Piast and Władysław Herman's sister). Cosmas of Prague, Prague, *Chronicle*, book 2:20. This complicated scenario is not depicted in Figure 2 or elsewhere in this article.

46 Otto of Freising, *Two Cities*, book 7:21.

47 Ibid. It should also be noted that there were additional positive outcomes for Béla, including building an alliance with the rulers in Austria, with whom he shared a border; allowing him to defeat Bolesław III's gambit to gain more power over the Hungarians; and allowing him to build a closer relationship with Emperor Lothar III.

members of his kinship web.⁴⁸ The details of the battle are few, but the contemporary chronicler Otto of Freising records that it ended in Boris and Bolesław's flight, losing many men in the process.⁴⁹ This one battle would also bring an end to Boris's first attempt on the Hungarian throne, as the German emperor, Lothar III, intervened to negotiate an armistice between the sides at Merseburg, which also effectively ended Bolesław III's support of Boris's claim.⁵⁰ One can speculate that Lothar III did this because the wide-ranging conflict had involved two Árpáds, the Piast and Přemyslid rulers, and many of his own German nobles.⁵¹ This level of involvement was the almost inevitable result of the kinship webs that underlay the family dynamics of medieval elites. When situational kinship networks were activated, as in this instance, they could still span several kingdoms and traditional dynasties. And though such conflict could be contained, in that it included only a subset of a larger kinship web, it had the potential to draw in more and more people if it progressed—hence Lothar III's intervention and the relatively short campaigns that traditionally accompanied such conflicts.

Boris does not appear to have renewed his claim again during Béla II's reign, but he did continue to expand his kinship web, notably by marrying a relative of Emperor John II Komnenos, prior to the Byzantine emperor's death in 1143.⁵² While this marriage represents a renewal of the Árpád-Komneni ties mentioned above (which had also been instrumental to Almos), it did not serve an immediate purpose in Boris's quest to reach the Hungarian throne. Indeed, Boris is absent not just because the focus of the sources was trained elsewhere, but because of the nature of his campaigns to gain the throne. Boris did not have much support from within the Árpád kingdom, and he required outside assistance in each of his attempts. In part, this is because he had little support or visibility within the Árpád kingdom. Though Otto of Freising records that Hungarian nobles had invited him to make his first attempt on the throne in 1132, they disappear quickly from the account, and the focus is on Boris and Bolesław III.⁵³ Boris's most potent allies, as we have seen, came from elsewhere in Europe and were the product of Boris's

48 Otto of Freising, *Two Cities*, book 7:21. It is also useful to recognize that Bishop Otto was also the son of Margrave Leopold, and thus linked to these events personally: Mierow's n. 105 in this translation.

49 Otto of Freising, *Two Cities*, book 7:21, sec. 21.

50 Poole, "Germany," 345.

51 *Ibid.*

52 Kinnamos, *Deeds*, books 3:11 and 1:10. What happened to Boris's Piast wife, Judith, is unknown.

53 Otto of Freising, *Two Cities*, book 7:21.

use of situational kinship networks to assist him. Moreover, the various conflicts that were raging across Europe during this decade prevented him from capitalizing on any of the relationships in his kinship web. The German empire descended into war soon after Lothar III negotiated the peace at Merseburg, with Lothar and many of his nobles campaigning against Roger II of Sicily; after Lothar's death in 1137, the empire descended into civil war.⁵⁴ The Piasts were similarly disarrayed after Bolesław III's death in 1138, when his sons fought against each other to succeed him.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, Boris's new kinsman John II Komnenos was focused upon his eastern frontier, waging several wars over Antioch and the surrounding area.⁵⁶ This removed some of the major possibilities for forging situational kinship networks and further illustrates the fragile nature of the enterprise that Boris had undertaken. It was reliant not only upon constructed kinship networks and the goodwill or avarice of family members, but also upon the political opportunities available in western Eurasia.

Boris's Second Attempt on the Throne

Boris's marriage to a Komnena was undoubtedly an important part of his kinship web, but his second attempt on the throne of the Árpáds, this time against Béla II's son Géza II, originated not from Komneni territory but from German territory. The situational kinship network that Boris constructed for his attempt in 1146 sheds even more light on the complex family dynamics embedded in the medieval kinship web. In this instance, Boris was supported by the new Přemyslid ruler of the Bohemians, Vladislav II, as well as by Vladislav II's wife Gertrude; whereas in 1132, the Přemyslid ruler Soběslav had opposed him.⁵⁷ The intervening decade had not only witnessed a change in rule amongst the Bohemians, from Soběslav to Vladislav II, but also a change in the political calculations of the Přemyslids relative to Boris. The reason for this is not clear, though one might conjecture that Vladislav II, as the son of Soběslav's elder brother and rival Vladislav, was acting to block the interests of a rival branch of his own Přemyslid family.⁵⁸ In which case,

54 Poole, "Germany," 345–47. Benjamin Arnold discusses the overarching rivalry between Lothar III and Conrad III which occupied much attention throughout the 1130s: "Western Empire."

55 Polish "Great Chronicle", cc. 31, 33. The *Hypatian Chronicle* (CE 1142) mentions the conflict as stemming from the Volodimerovichi support of Władysław. Otto of Freising references it as well: *Deeds*, book 1:30.

56 Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 378–79.

57 Otto of Freising, *Two Cities*, book 7:34.

58 There was a history of trouble between these families that continued after the death of

Vladislav II's participation in an alliance had little to do with Boris himself but was instead calculated to benefit Vladislav II and harm the supporters of Soběslav, while also helping Boris achieve his goal. For Boris, however, Vladislav's support was crucial, since he needed access to Vladislav's kinship web.

Vladislav II and Gertrude introduced Boris to Emperor Conrad III, Gertrude's brother and founder of the new Hohenstaufen line of German rulers, to whom Boris appealed for assistance (Figure 4).⁵⁹ Conrad, swayed by the presence of his sister and brother-in-law (Otto of Freising tells us),⁶⁰ agreed to assist Boris in his attempt on the Hungarian throne. The support of Conrad III, combined with that of Vladislav II and Gertrude, was crucial in raising the soldiers necessary for Boris to attack the border fortress of Pressburg, though neither Vladislav II nor Conrad III participated personally in the military conflict.⁶¹ But even more essential than military support was the tacit assistance that tends not to be stressed by chroniclers: the lack of interference from the wide ranging kin network to which Gertrude and Conrad III belonged (see Figure 4). This network allowed Boris largely free rein and helped to mitigate any assistance that Géza II might seek. Boris was also of aid to this network, as he provided a *casus belli* for Henry II, the Babenberg margrave of Austria (and half-brother of Conrad III) with whom the Árpáds shared an uneasy border, to once again go to war against his Hungarian neighbors.⁶² Boris thus led a mixed army that included Hungarian adherents of his own, some German nobles, and mercenaries hired by Vladislav II, against the border fortress of Pressburg (Map 1).⁶³ Boris and his supporters took the fortress, but their victory was short-lived. Géza II led a counterattack, stopping just short of the fortress and bribing Boris's supporters to abandon him.⁶⁴ This caused Boris to flee back into

Soběslav in 1140, when the next ruler was supposed to be Vladislav, son of Soběslav. Instead, Vladislav II, son of Vladislav I, was elected. See Wolverton, *Hastening toward Prague*, 213–14.

59 Otto of Freising, *Two Cities*, book 7:34.

60 Ibid.: "Through the intercession of the aforesaid duke of Bohemia [Vladislav] and his wife Gertrude, sister of the king, he obtained the king's promise regarding this matter, ratified by an honorable pledge."

61 Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, book 1:31 (30).

62 Henry II's position is even more complex than one can see here, as he was also the brother of Adalbert, husband of Béla II's sister Hedwig. The kinship webs of medieval royals stretched far and wide and inevitably, many of the people with whom one came into conflict were within one's kinship webs. Thus, the creation of situational kinship networks to create networks for conflict management and to erect "firewalls" within kinship webs.

63 Otto of Freising, *Two Cities*, book 7:34; Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, book 1:31 (30).

64 Ibid.

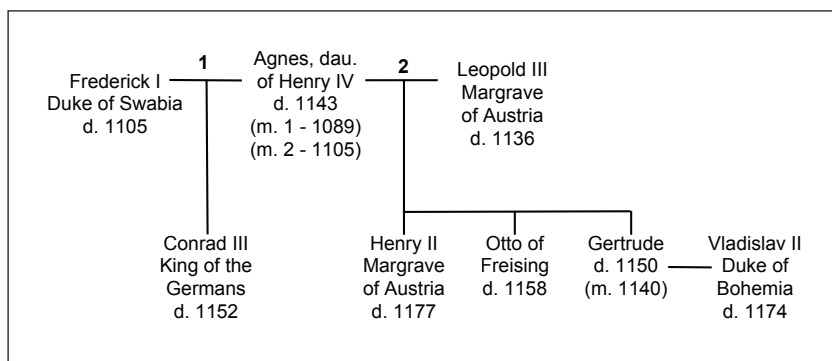


Figure 4. Boris's Allies of 1146 and Their Families⁶⁵

German territory, where Géza subsequently pursued him, and there continued his attack by fighting and defeating Henry II (Figure 4).⁶⁶

In the end, Géza needed no more assistance than his treasury to defeat Boris by bribing his soldiers, but his subsequent actions, including the attack on Henry II after Boris's flight,⁶⁷ shows that he understood the extent of the situational kinship network backing Boris—including the role of those members that participated in nonmilitary ways. Following these events, Conrad III also felt the pain of his involvement with Boris, as Géza broke off the marriage agreement previously arranged between Conrad III's son and Géza's sister.⁶⁸ Conrad's attempt to go on crusade the next year was also affected by the repercussions of his involvement in Boris's attempt on Géza's throne, since Géza forced Conrad to negotiate the terms of his army's passage through Géza's kingdom.⁶⁹ The possible gain to the participants is often what encouraged people to join these situational kinship networks

⁶⁵ Henry II, margrave of Austria, is also Henry XI, duke of Bavaria.

⁶⁶ Ibid. Henry is an interesting figure in this regard, as he is half-brother to Conrad III and brother to Otto of Freising. Henry and Conrad III are the main objects of Géza's attack and Boris is not mentioned at all in the two Hungarian sources. See "Annales Posonienses," CE 1145; *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum*, 137–38. Boris, and his claim, may also have been used by Henry XI as a pretext for war against his neighbors; see below.

⁶⁷ Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, book 1:31 (30). *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum* (137–38) does not include Boris at all in its account, but focuses on that battle with Henry II and his supporter Conrad III.

⁶⁸ Urbansky, *Byzantium and the Danube Frontier*, 69–70.

⁶⁹ Berry, "Second Crusade," 483–84. Though Conrad III was delayed by the treaty negotiations with Géza, Géza did end up paying him a substantial amount to guarantee peace, so perhaps it was not entirely a loss for Conrad. See *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum*, 138.

and support a particular cause. But it must also be acknowledged that there were negative costs to these relationships as well.

Boris's Life and Death in Byzantium

Deprived of further assistance from his allies in the region, Boris turned to his wife's kin in Constantinople. However, getting there involved crossing Géza's kingdom. He succeeded in doing so in the company of Louis VII, the Capetian king of the Franks, who allowed him to come along precisely because of the kinship web that Boris had built. In allowing Boris passage with his army, Louis is recorded to have said that he was doing so because of Boris's marriage to a Komnena.⁷⁰ This indicates not a specific relationship with the Capetians, or to Louis's family at all, but it once again emphasizes the importance, not just of specific relationships between individuals (or families), but the larger ramifications of those relationships for others. That tie to the imperial family was important to Louis because of the assistance he knew that he would require from the Komneni once he reached Constantinople, in order to begin his crusade. Thus, Boris's relationship with an entirely different family, from a different region of Europe, created a rationale for the Frankish king's assistance, thereby antagonizing the king of the Hungarians.⁷¹

Once in Constantinople, Boris furthered the efforts of his wife's cousin, Manuel Komnenos, to overthrow Géza II, or at least to harm him. Manuel was already involved in ongoing hostilities with Géza II, due to Géza's (and his father-in-law Ban Beloš's) inroads into Roman territory in the Balkans. It is unclear whether Manuel ever planned to place Boris on the throne of the Árpáds, but his claim was certainly used to antagonize Géza during their campaigns.⁷² For instance, while Géza II was absent from his kingdom in 1151, Manuel led a massive invasion of Hungarian territory, with Boris as part of his entourage.⁷³ When Géza heard of this attack and returned, Manuel deployed Boris and his soldiers to raid deeper into Hungarian territory, drawing Géza away from Manuel's forces. The Byzantine chronicler John Kinnamos records that Géza chased Boris more because of his identity as a rival, than because of the damage that he was doing.⁷⁴ Boris's partici-

⁷⁰ Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII*, 2:35–39. It is also possible that Vratislav II's presence in Louis's entourage was helpful in gaining Boris a place. See Otto of Freising and his continuator, Rahewin: *Deeds*, book 1:42.

⁷¹ Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII*, 2:35–39.

⁷² Kinnamos, *Deeds*, book 3:11.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Paul Stephenson suggests that Boris was specifically used to goad Géza into a pitched battle: *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 230.

pation in this engagement, then, was due to his situational kinship network with Manuel: and while it probably cannot be construed as a concerted attempt to take control of the Árpádan realm, Boris may have thought otherwise.

It was the same kind of conflict with Géza II, with Boris in Manuel's army, which brought Boris's life to a close. In 1156, with Géza II and Manuel negotiating along the Danube,⁷⁵ Boris led a campaign of raids into Hungarian territory, where he was killed by a Cuman arrow—though it is unclear (ironically) which army this Turkic mercenary was supporting.⁷⁶

Boris's death (at the age of 43) brought an end to his personal struggle for the throne of the Árpáds, but it coincided with the arrival in Byzantium of more claimants to that throne. Around 1157, Manuel Komnenos married his niece Maria to Stephen, Géza II's own brother and rival, who had just fled to Byzantium looking for assistance. Manuel's extension of his kinship web to these new Árpád exiles, Stephen and his brother Ladislaus, gave him options for creating new and more effective situational kinship networks to utilize against Géza II. This might also call into question the motive of the Cuman who killed Boris: was he working for Géza II or Manuel Komnenos? In the final analysis, all of these actors shared a kinship web, but with whom they chose to make situational kinship networks was a shifting proposition, one that did not favor Boris Kolomanovich in the long term.

Conclusion—and Suggestions for a New Historical Methodology

The story of Boris Kolomanovich could simply be that of one man attempting to claim a throne, and subsumed within the frame of Hungarian history. But, as shown here, it actually gives us a window into a much larger world. It also allows us to challenge some of the traditional ideas about family organization and identity that have structured the discourse of medieval history for generations. But where does all of this leave us in our investigation and what paths forward does it offer?

One conclusion that can be drawn from this story is that the current way of writing medieval European history, exemplified here by the history of eastern Europe, is insufficient and inaccurate. Writing a history of "Hungary," even while taking account of "foreign" interactions and affairs, cannot accurately represent the ways and the extent to which the elites of the medieval world were interconnected. The path forward then is to begin to think and write about any and all

⁷⁵ Kinnamos, *Deeds*, book 3:19.

⁷⁶ Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, book 2:52. It is unclear simply from the text for whom the Cumans were working as mercenaries. Urbansky suggests that the Cumans were in the pay of Géza II, rather than the Byzantines: *Byzantium and the Danube Frontier*, 80–81.

medieval territories without modern nations read back in time, and with medieval political boundaries only tentatively outlined. The peregrinations of medieval people were not limited to those of traveling merchants but were part of elite life as well, and placing firm boundaries around a kingdom is a modern phenomenon rather than a medieval one. A new type of medieval political history would begin with an acknowledgement that there *were* medieval borders—but historians would need to be willing to follow the stories and the characters wherever they might lead.

Another possible path forward, demonstrated here, is to focus on families and their relationships to these territories while avoiding the common tendency to substitute the ruling family (the Árpáds in this case) for a nation or kingdom (Hungary) so that the anachronistic situation discussed above is replicated. One corrective to this, suggested here, would be to focus on situational kinship networks and their effects on identity. Boris Kolomanovich seems to have altered his identity several times during his lifetime, to best take advantage of the opportunities afforded by these networks. He emphasized his marital relationships when he needed assistance from his father-in-law Bolesław III, as well as when seeking support from his cousins-in-law, the Komeneni, or even when gaining safe passage from Louis VII. But he emphasized his natal relations when attempting to motivate supporters within Hungarian territory, both in 1132 and 1146. Due to such complexities, it would be difficult to label Boris as Árpád, Volodimerovichi, Piast, or Komneni throughout his life. Instead, he was enmeshed in a kinship web wherein he had access to each of those identities, and possibly more, and was able to identify as each situationally, in pursuit of his goal. The resulting situational kinship networks which Boris created allowed him to attempt to claim the crown of the Árpáds, but they also reveal a new way to look at the complicated kinship webs of medieval politics that is broadly applicable across the medieval globe.

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Christian Raffensperger (craffensperger@wittenberg.edu) focuses on the study of Rus' in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and its place within Europe. He has authored articles that have appeared, or will appear, in journals such as *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, *Medieval Prosopography*, *Imenoslov*, *Byzantinische Forschungen*, and *Russian Review*; and in edited collections such as *Writing Medieval Women's Lives*. His book, *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus' in the Medieval World* (2012) situates Rus' firmly within the boundaries of Europe and uses dynastic marriage, trade, and religious ties to demonstrate that Rus' was not part of a Byzantine commonwealth or Eastern "Other," but an integral part of medieval Europe. His next book, *Ties of Kinship: Russian Genealogy and Dynastic Marriage*, will be released in the fall of 2015 and is part genealogy and part analysis of the dynastic marriages made by the Russian ruling family, the Volodimerovichi, over the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This project has a parallel online digital humanities component that may be accessed at <genealogy.obdurodon.org>. Raffensperger graduated from Bates College in Lewiston and received his MA and PhD from the University of Chicago. He is currently Associate Professor of History at Wittenberg University in Ohio, and an associate of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute.

Abstract The politics of kinship and of monarchy in medieval eastern Europe are typically constructed within the framework of the modern nation-state, read back into the past. The example of Boris Kolomanovich, instead, highlights the horizontal interconnectivity of medieval Europe and its neighbors and demonstrates the malleability of individual identity within kinship webs, as well as the creation of situational kinship networks to advance individuals' goals.

Keywords kinship, identity, dynastic marriage, medieval Europe, Hungary, Rus'.

THE GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL MOBILITY OF SLAVES: THE RISE OF SHAJAR AL-DURR, A SLAVE- CONCUBINE IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY EGYPT

D. FAIRCHILD RUGGLES

THE PREMODERN ISLAMIC world was characterized by mobility. Pilgrims and traders traveled great distances, often in groups by caravan or ship, not unlike organized tours in the modern world. They went along well-marked routes and stayed at caravanserais and urban *khans* (inns) that offered safety for them and their goods, which might be fine porcelain imported from China or luxury textiles of fine cotton, wool, and silk made and exchanged within the Islamic world. Moreover, they could communicate with relative ease, facilitated by a common language, Arabic. Letters, goods, and people went back and forth from the Pacific coast of Asia to the Atlantic coast of Africa and Europe, so that by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Muslims were connected through trade networks from Cordoba to Timbuktu, Cairo, Baghdad, Delhi, and Canton. There were some intrepid travelers, like Ibn Battuta between 1325 and 1354, who went to all those places (or so he said).¹

One object of trade was human chattel. Slaves were acquired in various ways: as conquered peoples in the aftermath of war, through the progeny of existing slaves, from sub-Saharan slave dealers, and through forced conscription or the sale of children by poor parents.² The institution of slavery in Islam was by no means benevolent or fair. But, unlike slavery in the modern global West, where the institution was tied to large-scale agricultural labor, capitalism, and racial discrimination, slavery in Islam did not divide society so thoroughly because it offered multiple opportunities for integration. The result was a Muslim society that was porous, allowing non-Muslims and foreigners to become integrated into, and invested in, Islamic society, many of them converting to the faith. Slavery allowed some people to achieve rapid social mobility.

This was especially noticeable in Egypt in the thirteenth through early sixteenth centuries, where Turkic slaves from Asia rose to become army leaders and

1 Ibn Batutah, *Travels*.

2 On slave dealers, see Hunwick, "Black Africans." On parents selling children and the general poverty of the steppe, see Ayalon, "Mamluk: Military Slavery," 3 (citing Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari, *Masalik al-absar*).

even sultans over Arab Egypt. Shajar al-Durr—who rose from slavery to become the legitimately appointed sultan of Egypt in 1250—is such a case. Although she was exceptional for being a woman who ascended to the highest level of authority, her rags-to-riches story was not uncommon among Egypt's slave population.

Slavery was experienced differently by different people, and it was different for men than for women. In the Ayyubid era (1169–1250 CE) and, to a lesser extent, even in the Fatimid period (969–1171 in Egypt), slaves began to be imported into Egypt not simply as a haphazard consequence of war but due to trade connections organized expressly for that purpose. In Egypt in the later Ayyubid period, children were typically purchased at a young age from destitute pagan parents or recently Christianized Turks—specifically the Qipchaq people on the steppe northeast of the Black Sea (today western Kazakhstan and southern Russia: see Map 2).³ The already poor Qipchaqs suffered from the Mongol onslaughts in the 1230s, and the ensuing social upheaval made them a prime source for slaves. Indeed, the name Qipchaq may derive from the Turkic *qivčaq*, meaning “unfortunate.”⁴ The Turkic youths were then brought to Cairo where they were educated in Islam and the military arts, the luckiest belonging to the military corps of the sultan, the less lucky being bought by amirs of lesser rank.⁵ These *mamlūks* (an Arabic word that literally means “owned”) were by definition foreigners and non-Muslim.⁶ They enjoyed status as members of the sultan's personal bodyguard and the elite army, in which they could rise to leadership positions, having been formally freed upon completion of their training.⁷

Freedom did not mean disengagement, however. A slave in Islam, even when freed, did not separate from the former master but became a client (*mawlā*) with

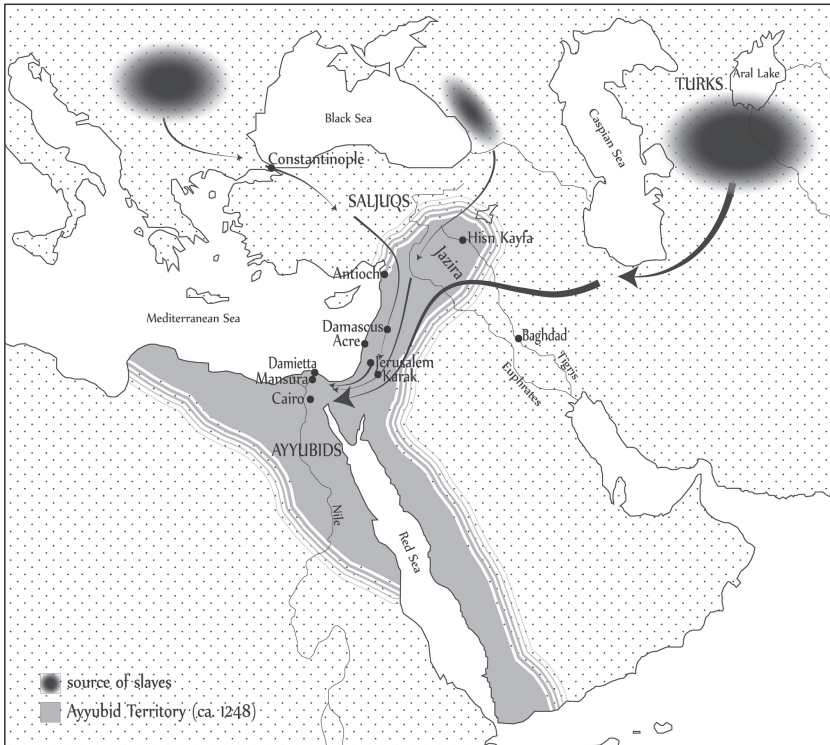
3 On the Qipchaqs, see Golden, “Shaping of the Cuman-Qipchaqs.” My thanks to Christian Raffensperger for steering me toward the bibliography on Rus' and the Eurasian steppe. Arabic sources confirm that the Qipchaqs were preferred as slaves; see Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari, *Masalik al-absar*.

4 Golden, “Shaping of the Cuman-Qipchaqs,” 318.

5 Ayalon, “Mamluk: Military Slavery,” 1–19.

6 Throughout this essay, I use the general term *mamlūk* to designate a slave, and Mamluk to refer to the slave dynasty that eventually ruled Egypt: the Bahri line (1250–1390) and the Burji line (1382–1517). According to Islamic law, a Muslim could not be enslaved (although slaves who converted to Islam did not thereby gain freedom). However, because human beings could become property from which profits could be made, the law was certainly breached many times (Hunwick, “Black Africans,” 23).

7 Although freeborn men also served in the Egyptian army, in fact slaves held the highest posts. See Ayalon, “Mamluk: Military Slavery,” 12; “Studies I”; “Studies II”; “Studies III”; and *L'Esclavage du mamlouk*. See also Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 7–8.



Map 2. Slave Routes in the Late Ayyubid Period, 1240s CE. Map by Faezeh Ashtiani, with information derived from Malise Ruthven, *Historical Atlas of Islam*.

continuing obligations between patron and client. The *mawlā* thus remained attached to the household, adopted the family name of the former master, and derived social status from that relationship. In the case of the *mamlūk* soldiers, the circumstances of their conscription as slaves and subsequent rise through the ranks of the army to become generals show how slavery could work. For some slaves, the institution offered a means of social advancement, while for the masters it ensured steadfast loyalty,⁸ as well as a way of acquiring large numbers of people from elsewhere and “domesticating” them. These slaves were, after all, Armenians, Kurds, and, above all, Turks, not Arabs from Egypt.

Large numbers of male slaves were imported into Egypt through this strategy of creating an elite army of Turkic troops, but female slaves from the same areas were also acquired in equal or higher numbers.⁹ While it has been estimated that

⁸ Ayalon, “Mamluk: Military Slavery,” 10–11.

⁹ Ayalon, “Mamluk: Military Slavery,” 16; and “Mamluk.”

elsewhere in the Islamic world women and girls were imported at rates up to double that of men and boys—to serve as maids, nurses, cooks, laundresses, and concubines¹⁰—in Egypt, the demand for boys may have been higher, so as to stock the army. The story of how that army was created and trained, how it provided powerful support for the last Ayyubid sultan, and ultimately how its members came to rule in the Mamluk dynasty (1250–1517) has led historians to focus on military slavery. Indeed, most histories relate the transition from hereditary Ayyubid rule to the non-hereditary Mamluk rule by casting this as an exclusively male story. But the key individual in that transition was a woman who came to Cairo as one of those enslaved Qipchaq children from the steppe.

Slavery for women often meant sexual service, which is how Shajar al-Durr came to the Ayyubid court. Her date of birth is unknown, but she was certainly young—perhaps about fifteen years of age—since she had no children when she was given to Sultan al-Salih (r. 1240–49) just before 1239, and thereafter became his favored concubine. Thus we can infer a birthdate sometime around 1222–24.¹¹ The fate of one such slave girl is recounted in the *Maqamat*, a collection of short tales that became a popular Arabic genre from the tenth century onward. *Maqamat* collections were often accompanied by lively pictures, as in the version written by al-Hariri (1054–1122), a copy of which was illustrated by al-Wasiti in 1237 (Plate 1). This illustrated *Maqamat* manuscript was made at around the same time that the young Shajar al-Durr herself was for sale. The painting shows a slave market with three dark-skinned slaves from Africa in plain white and red robes, a light-skinned figure lurking behind one of the Africans, and—approaching from the left—a well-dressed man in a gold-trimmed red robe gesturing toward the slight figure of a girl, whose expression is clearly one of dismay or fear. Above, the venality of the transactions about to take place is signified by the scales on which money and human lives will be measured. The scale is positioned at the center of the picture, and its balance—indicating that the sale has not yet been made—together with the complex interplay of hand gestures, introduces an element of tension that heightens the drama of the scene.

¹⁰ Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves*, 4, 61.

¹¹ On Shajar al-Durr's Qipchaq origins, see Levanoni, "Mamluks' Ascent"; Maqriza, *Kitab al-Suluk*, 1:361. More generally, on the political rise of Shajar al-Durr, see Levanoni, "Šağar ad-Durr," in which she cites Muḥammad ibn Salim ibn Wasil's *Muffarij al-kurub fi akhbar Bani Ayyub* in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ar. 1702–1703 (fols. 353 and 354b). See also Schregle, *Die Sultanin von Ägypten*, 43–45.



Plate 1. A Slave Market: From the *Maqamat* by al-Hariri, Painted by al-Wasiti, 1237. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France Ar. 5847 fol. 105. Reproduced with permission by Bridgeman Images.

In another version of the story, written in 1126–38 by Al-Saraqusti ibn al-Ashtarkuwi (or Ibn al-Ashtarkuni), the narrator, who is himself shopping for a girl, describes the scene.

Today, I entered the slave-market with a yearning soul and a tender heart, where a slave-girl—and what a slave-girl!—was put up for sale; one whose beauty penetrated and flowed into men’s souls; one who played with men’s passions and fantasies as *maysir* [a pre-Islamic game of chance] players do with gambling arrows, and who deposited in men’s hearts, a love for her by which they were distracted from all other loves. She left a flame in my heart and heaped affection and yearning for her in me and, indeed, had you been near her, you would have overheard her conversation, as she agreed and disagreed with her master, responding to him in rhythm and rhyme, when he said to her: “O product of my upbringing, do not forget my love and affection! O sister of my son, you are never far from my heart! O offspring of moons, how much love do I conceal for you!”

The master continues on at some length, proclaiming his affection and extolling her beauty. She then retorts, in verse:

Why do you, along with your cymbal, with the invocation of your passion,
and with the melodies of your lute and shawm, / Demand a separation
from me, and then complain of it, if Fate has precedence in the matter, as
well as its own course of action?

Shifting to prose, she castigates him:

As for your having brought me up properly, shown me kindness, out of love for me, made me second only to your son, and a dweller in your heart, a companion to ladies fair as stars and moons, and one to whom you entrusted your secrets and confidences, I reciprocated by pleasing you with my beauty and kindness, while nothing distracted me from you or made me forget you until, when Time struck you down, and a price seduced you, you exposed me to the baseborn, degraded my virtue, divulged my secret, and broached what was sealed, for you did not appreciate my value, or really gaze upon the sun or moon of my beauty. Thus, if there were a true flame in your heart, no gold coin would have tempted you to sell me—how far is a paltry silver coin from love, or water from a lizard.¹²

¹² Al-Saraqusti ibn al-Ashtarkuwi, *Al-Maqamat al-luzumiyah*, 274–75.

The story then describes the bidding war that ensues. The highest bidder, who is the narrator, delivers the money under the supervision of the market inspector, and she is handed over—an object of sale.

Of course, the girl in both the text and the manuscript painting is fictional, and one wonders if such outspoken retorts could have been tolerated from a mere slave. But the time and place parallel the beginnings of Shajar al-Durr, and it does not require much imagination to envision Shajar al-Durr herself as the protagonist and allow the tale to provide a glimpse of a key moment in the life of such a person. Although extolled by male writers for their beauty and the love provoked in the hearts or loins of their masters, the women's lives—as the character in the *Maqamat* reminds us—were valued in “paltry silver coin.” They were part of a ubiquitous exchange system in which human beings were taken by force from one part of the world and introduced into service elsewhere as soldier, servant, or concubine. Although some labor was notoriously terrible (serving in galley ships, for example), other forms of service often led to a lifelong affiliation with and loyalty to the house in which the slave performed his or her duties. The loyalty arose for many reasons: the slave had no other home, the slave and master or mistress might develop genuinely affectionate relationships, and the children that were born to the slave concubines generated certain rights that their mothers would seek to preserve.

A Muslim man could marry up to four wives but could take on as many slave women as his means allowed. Marriages to freewomen were contractual unions in which property and personal rights were guided by law and tradition. In marriage, a man had obligations to fulfill: the wives had to be treated absolutely equally, so that a house for one meant a house for the others, and a gift for one meant gifts for the others. Divorce could be expensive, since it meant returning the dowry to the wife. In contrast, union with a slave was much easier, since equity was not necessary, and if she behaved badly, she could be sold. A slave had little say in whether she was used for sex by her owner. However, it was much to her advantage to comply, because genuine loyalty and affection from the master could result, and, if she gave birth to his son, she would enjoy an improvement in status.¹³ Furthermore, the law decreed that she could not be separated from her child (male or female), could no longer be sold, and would be manumitted upon the death of her owner (although, given the loss of value that this entailed, surely there were cases where these rights were ignored). The children born of that union had the same legal status as progeny born to wives, which meant that the children could expect to

¹³ In contrast, if the child was fathered by another slave, the child inherited slave status. The social and legal status of concubines is explained in Marmon, “Concubinage, Islamic.”

inherit their percentage of the estate on the death of the father. Because Muslim law dictates that individuals cannot bequeath their entire estates according to their will, they cannot favor a particular wife, son, or close friend. Their estates are divided according to a formula found in the Qur'an, and in the formula the children are treated equally, regardless of the legal status of the mother (although, in either case, sons inherited more than daughters).¹⁴ In other words, the slave mother had status, could expect freedom, and could theoretically retire in ease, provided for by the inheritance that her son received.

Thus, through the children of slave women, social mobility occurred not only within Egyptian society but also within the Muslim family. Yet as slaves, these women were by definition non-Muslim, at least by origin. In thirteenth-century Egypt, slaves were usually Turkic and specifically Qipchaq, but this importation of foreign slaves was not an exclusively Egyptian or Ayyubid phenomenon. In the imperial harem of Ottoman Istanbul in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Leslie Peirce has found Christian women of Polish, Greek, Balkan, Armenian, and Italian origins.¹⁵ Similarly, my research on Muslim Spain shows that the slave consorts who gave birth to the royal heirs were largely Basque or Frankish.¹⁶ Ottoman Turkey was therefore ruled entirely by sultans born of concubines, and likewise Umayyad Spain. The result in all these courts was an intimate form of heterogeneity: the introduction, into politically and dynastically important families, of women whose cultural formation was very different from the dominant culture in which they now lived.

Shajar al-Durr was given to al-Salih while he was still a provincial Ayyubid governor in Anatolia. In 1239, al-Salih became ruler of Damascus, considerably more central and strategically important, but he had to fight fiercely against his own family members to maintain that position. It was a turbulent year in which he gained and lost his holdings, was abandoned by his political supporters, and was imprisoned by his cousin with only a few of his *mamlūks* (the rest deserted him) from October 1239 to April 1240. In that stressful period, when al-Salih also lost his son and heir (killed while being held as a hostage), Shajar al-Durr remained with him. She probably had little choice in the matter, but her constancy earned her the sultan's trust as well as an infant son, born while in captivity in 1240.

¹⁴ Powers, *Studies in Qur'an and Hadiith*.

¹⁵ In the Ottoman imperial era, slaves—at least those of the highest ranks—not only retained a sense of identity from their homeland but also often promoted its interests in court diplomacy, according to Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 219–20. See also Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (*Cins*) Solidarity."

¹⁶ Ruggles, "Mothers of a Hybrid Dynasty."

Around this moment—the sources do not state specifically when—Shajar al-Durr also became the sultan's wife. In Islamic law, this entails a shift in legal status from slave to free, but it probably did not greatly impact her social standing, which was entirely the result of her liaison with the sultan. Nor, as we have seen, did it affect the status of the child who, as the sultan's son (regardless of the legal status of the mother), was now in line for the throne. Indeed, given that the sultan had only one other living son at this point—a young man of bad character—the birth of a “back-up” heir was dynastically significant. With regards to Shajar al-Durr, whether slave or free, she earned respect and privileges as the mother of his son. She had also presumably converted to Islam, as was common among slaves. It turned out that her son, whose name was Khalil, died after three months; but nonetheless, she kept the title of *wālidat al-Malik al-Manṣūr Khalīl* (Mother of Malik al-Mansur Khalil).¹⁷

Within a few months, al-Salih's fortunes had improved. By pitting brother against cousin, in typical Ayyubid fashion, he managed to negotiate his release from captivity. Very soon thereafter, he was invited by the amirs of Cairo to rule that province, which he did beginning in June 1240, a reign that lasted until his death in 1249.¹⁸ As sultan of Egypt, al-Salih faced serious challenges: the Ayyubid political consortium had to be maintained, although the various factions were in a constant state of internecine war; the French king Louis IX's army of crusaders had to be repelled; and Cairo had to be kept under control.¹⁹ Although previous Ayyubid leaders in Egypt and Syria had employed *mamlūk* soldiers, who might be of Kurdish, Armenian, and Turkic origins, al-Salih seems to have selected only Qipchaq Turks. His strategy of employing a *mamlūk* slave army with no connection to the Arab majority of Egypt over which he ruled, and who benefitted from the education and social status that he gave them, ensured their loyalty to him. Moreover, it produced a strong, ethnically cohesive military force that was highly successful in defending Egypt at a time of constant threat.

¹⁷ The titlature varied. Abu al-Fida recorded (in his *Kitab al-mukhtasar*) that the Sultan's letters were signed with her seal; cited by Soetens, “*Šağarat ad-Durr*,” 100. On coins, her title was *al-Musta'šimiyya al-Šālihiyya malikat al-muslimīn wālidat al-Malik al-Manṣūr*: Amman, “Shadjar al-Durr”; see also Maqrizi, *Kitab al-Suluk*, 1:362. The epithet *al-Musta'šimiyya*, in reference to the Abbasid Caliph al-Musta'sim, reflected no special loyalty: the Ayyubid rulers were nominally appointed by the caliph and acknowledged his authority in the weekly sermon in their mosques.

¹⁸ A concise political history of al-Salih's reign is given in Richards, “al-Malik al-Salih,” 988–89.

¹⁹ He was officially designated as sultan by the caliphate, as Humphreys explains in *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 366 (citing as evidence Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zaman*, 499–500).

When the sultan was away on military campaigns, he trusted the government to his *mamlūk* advisors and Shajar al-Durr, who had already proved her loyalty to al-Salih and whose authority in the eyes of the people came from her status as mother of the sultan's deceased son.²⁰ Thus, when the sultan died of the wounds received in battle in November of 1249, Shajar al-Durr was well prepared to serve as regent. Together with al-Salih's advisers, she made the immediate decision to conceal his death until the sole surviving heir, Turanshah (the sultan's son by a different wife), could be recalled from his provincial administrative post, a journey that took several months.²¹ During that tense time, Shajar al-Durr governed as she had previously, in the name of the sultan (whose death was kept secret) and as the regent for their long-deceased infant son.

When Turanshah finally arrived in Egypt on March 1, 1250, he was to have been guided by the deathbed testament of his father, who wrote: "O my son! I recommend Umm Khalil [Shajar al-Durr] to you [. . .] Treat her benevolently and respectfully. Put her at the highest rank, a rank which she had from me."²² Al-Salih also specifically advised his son to respect the slave army: "Without the cooperation of the *mamlūks*, I would never have been able to mount a horse, nor return to Damascus or any other city. Keep on good terms with them."²³ But flying in the face of his father's counsel, Turanshah mistreated the politically powerful *mamlūks*, and that group, having first supported the heir and maneuvered to place him safely on the throne, grew disgusted with his behavior and assassinated him on May 2, 1250.²⁴

In crisis, the *mamlūks* decided to place Shajar al-Durr herself on the throne, not as regent this time but as sultan. Her name was read in the Friday sermon, she issued coins with her titlature, and she distributed robes of honor: three key and highly public signs of sovereignty.²⁵ This was an unusual moment in Islamic political history, and it was recognized as such by the contemporary historian Ibn Wasil (1208–98), who called her the first Muslim woman sovereign (*malikat*

20 Levanoni, "Šaġar ad-Durr," 212 (translating a passage from Ibn Wasif Shah's *Kitab jawahir* in London, British Library, Or. 25731, fol. 64b).

21 Al-Salih had two other sons, but they had died before he reached Cairo: Cahen and Chabbouh, "Le Testament d'al-Malik as-Salih Ayyub."

22 Ibid., 105.

23 Ibid., 110.

24 Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zaman*, 520. This passage provides a vivid account of Turanshah's bad behavior, slashing his sword at candletops as though they were the heads of the *mamlūks*.

25 Maqrīzī, *Kitab al-Suluk*, 1:362, 366.

al-muslimin).²⁶ In fact, ten years earlier in distant India, a woman named Radiyya al-Dunya wa'l-Din had been first regent of Delhi for her father, and then sultan in 1236–40, although Ibn Wasil did not know that.²⁷

For many reasons having to do with Shajar al-Durr's sex, as well as with the Ayyubid submission to the caliphate in Baghdad and shifting political alliances among the *mamlūks* in Cairo itself, Shajar al-Durr's reign as sultan was brief. After ruling autonomously for three months, she was forced to enter into a co-ruling arrangement with an upper-middle ranked *mamlūk* from the army corps, a man named Aybak, and then to marry him.²⁸ The precise date of these events, and whether Aybak's rise led to a formal dethronement of Shajar al-Durr, is unclear. At some point in this period, a six-year-old child of the Ayyubid line was placed on the throne to preserve the appearance of Ayyubid rule, an arrangement that lasted until 1252, whereupon Aybak once again became sultan. He performed the public face of sovereignty, led the army, and conducted diplomacy; but all the while, out of the public eye in the Cairo Citadel, Shajar al-Durr still held considerable power, as evidenced by the fact that she continued to sign decrees. However, she was now dependent on a partner who was not of her own choosing and whom she did not trust.²⁹ A few years later, in 1257, Aybak did indeed betray her by negotiating to contract a new marriage with the daughter of a potential ally. This so enraged her, and perhaps caused her to fear marginalization as a result of the new alignment of power, that she and her *mamlūk* supporters assassinated him. Within days, Shajar al-Durr was herself assassinated in the bathhouse, in a plot instigated by pro-Aybak members of court—notably his first wife. Her body was cast ignominiously from the one of the windows of the Citadel and was quietly retrieved and buried in a tomb that she had built during her lifetime.³⁰

²⁶ See Gottschalk, "Die ägyptische Sultanin Šağarat," 45n8.

²⁷ Ali, "Radiyya," 371.

²⁸ Levanoni asserts (in "Šağar ad-Durr"), and the primary sources corroborate, that this was a relationship purely of convenience. But Max Van Berchem—on what basis is unknown—calls him "first the lover and then the husband of the sultana," reading a romantic attachment into what was clearly a cold political negotiation: Van Berchem, *Matériaux*, 113.

²⁹ Despite her marriage to Aybak, Shajar al-Durr continued to be identified in relation to her previous husband and their infant son, and to insist on the grounds of her legitimacy. This can be seen in a petition which she received in 1255 which she signed with the title *Wālidat Khalīl al-Šālihīya*, i.e., "mother of Khalil," according to the Mamluk administrator Al-Nuwairi: cited by Gottschalk, "Die ägyptische Sultanin Šağarat," 47.

³⁰ Shajar al-Durr's architectural patronage of al-Salih's tomb and her own tomb are the subject of my forthcoming book.

Shajar al-Durr died terribly, but her story is a remarkable one of a slave who rose from obscure beginnings among the Qipchaq nomads of Asia to become sultan of Egypt. Like all female concubines, she used the assets that she had: youth, beauty, intelligence, character, and courage. Certain romantic (probably invented) details that have been added to her already dramatic life by later historians reveal how powerfully her story appeals to the imagination.³¹ However, it is important to remember that, in many ways, Shajar al-Durr was *not* exceptional. She was one of many thousands of slaves purchased by the Ayyubid sultans and others for service in Egypt. Islamic law and its customary practices made it easy for such slaves to enter into society—perhaps not to assimilate in the modern (and perhaps mythical) sense of a “melting pot,” but certainly to convert to Islam, to acquire wealth and agency, to have a deep investment in that society as permanent members, and sometimes to gain freedom by purchasing it or through motherhood. History provides countless examples of female and male slaves who rose to power in such ways: from Subh, the influential Basque mother of Caliph Hisham II in tenth-century Umayyad Spain; to Ganazafer Agha, the Venetian-born captive who rose to become chief eunuch in the sixteenth-century Ottoman court.³²

If Shajar al-Durr was unique, it was only in her role as the regent for Sultan al-Salih and his infant son Khalil—ruling as an Ayyubid, without realizing that she would be nearly the last of that line—and in her place as the “founder” of the dynasty of so-called Slave Kings, the Mamluks. In the period that followed, Egypt would be ruled by freed Turkic slaves, whose numbers were replenished through sustained Mamluk sponsorship of the slave trade. Egypt would continue to exist not as a homogeneous Arab population but as a layered society of recently freed “first-generation” Turks (from various parts of western Asia and eastern Europe) who enjoyed great power, alongside their second-generation children who, despite birth as free persons and all the rights that such freedom gave them, did not enjoy the same political status and privileges of their fathers; as well as Muslim Arabs, non-Muslim Arabs, Copts, Nubians, Jews, and many others.

However, there is an important gendered dimension to this change that demands recognition. The pivotal shift from Ayyubid rule to the new Mamluk system occurred not simply because Shajar al-Durr was—like her peers in the new ruling elite—a freed slave. Retaining the designation of “al-Salihiya”—belonging

31 The reception of Shajar al-Durr through history as an increasingly romanticized legend is discussed in Shregle, *Die Sultanin von Ägypten*; and Gottschalk, “Die ägyptische Sultanin Šağarat.”

32 For Subh, see Ruggles, “Mothers of a Hybrid Dynasty”; for Gazanfer Agha, see Fetvacı, *Picturing History*, 239–40.

to al-Salih—she did of course embody a type of possession, the legal category of *mamlūk*, which for women (and men) could involve sexual servitude. But, equally importantly, she was a woman whose female body, possessed sexually by Sultan al-Salih, was capable of bearing the legitimate Ayyubid line, thus enabling her to represent him and his line, even though the potential heir that she bore did not live long enough to rule. If the political history of Egypt changed profoundly because of their union, Egypt as a whole was similarly the product of the co-mingling that occurred in the countless unions between such masters and their imported slaves, and geographic and social mobility perpetuated in medieval Muslim society.

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D. Fairchild Ruggles (dfr1@illinois.edu) is Professor in Landscape Architecture at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, with additional appointments in Architecture, Art History, and Medieval Studies. She is the author of two award-winning books on gardens: *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision in the Palaces of Islamic Spain* (2000) and *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* (2008), as well as numerous authored, edited and co-edited volumes on Islamic art history, cultural heritage, landscape history and theory, and the arts patronage of women in Islam.

Abstract Large numbers of outsiders were integrated into premodern Islamic society through the institution of slavery. Many were boys of non-Muslim parents drafted into the army, and some rose to become powerful political figures; in Egypt, after the death of Ayyubid sultan al-Salih (r. 1240–49), they formed a dynasty known as the Mamluks. For slave concubines, the route to power was different: Shajar al-Durr, the concubine of al-Salih, gained enormous status when she gave birth to his son and later governed as regent in her son's name, converting to Islam after her husband's death and then reigning as sultan in her own right. She emerges as a figure both unique and typical of the pathways to assimilation and mobility.

Keywords Cairo, Egypt, Islam, Mamluks, Ayyubids, slavery, gender, Maqamat, assimilation.

TOWARDS A CONNECTED HISTORY OF EQUINE CULTURES IN SOUTH ASIA: *BAHRĪ* (SEA) HORSES AND “HORSEMANIA” IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY SOUTH INDIA

ELIZABETH LAMBOURN

THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES ways that the concept of equine cultures, developed thus far principally in European and/or early modern and colonial contexts, might translate to premodern South Asia. As a first contribution to a history of equine matters in this region, it focuses on the maritime circulation of horses from the Middle East to Peninsular India in the thirteenth century, examining how this phenomenon is recorded in textual and material sources and assessing their potential for writing a new, more connected history of South Asia and the Indian Ocean world.

In *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture*, Donna Landry remarks upon “the imbalance between the equestrian saturation of early modern culture and today’s marginalization of matters equine.”¹ To many in the “First World,” the horse’s overwhelming association with elite sport and leisure, from polo to pony clubs, has obscured its profound importance in the history of daily life, both into the very recent past and in many parts of the world today. For its meat, its milk, its use as a draft animal, as a mount, and as a luxury object, the horse has been essential to many cultures and subcultures, and without these diverse uses the horse would not have become a global animal. Landry’s book has joined a small but growing num-

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This contribution began life as part of a panel on *Regions of Global Exchange* convened by Carol Symes at the 2013 Medieval Academy of America Annual Meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee. Although the topic will now be unrecognizable to my co-panelists, Christian Raffensperger and Carla Nappi, and to anyone who was in the audience that day, I would like to thank all involved for their good company and interest in the global medieval, wherever it is to be found.

I Landry, *Noble Brutes*, 14.

ber of studies redressing this imbalance through an imaginative combination of textual, visual, and material sources that convey the breadth and depth of this forgotten “equine saturation,” as it is termed by Landry.² Equine cultures as they emerge through this scholarship are an entangled complex of animate and inanimate things decidedly unbounded by subject-object oppositions: from grooms, horse merchants, veterinarians, and those who rode or worked horses, to horse furnishings and stables, writings about horses (such as veterinary and military treatises), visual and sculptural representations, and of course horses themselves.

Where earlier scholarship approached horses as commodities in a larger economic history, as military technologies in a broader history of warfare, or again as veterinary subjects in a wider history of premodern medicine, the new focus on equine cultures places horses at the center and brings these different disciplines together to write deeper cultural and intellectual histories. As Landry’s title suggests, “Eastern” horses were an important locus of encounter between the English and the Orient: that encounter produced the English thoroughbred and substantially changed English equestrian practices in the eighteenth century, but also impacted national identity. Not only were new riding styles seen to differentiate the English from their Continental European neighbors, the “free forward movement” experienced by the gentry during cross-country riding became associated with ideas of liberty, control, and adventure that were profoundly entangled with contemporary political thought and the British imperial enterprise.³ Horses, it transpires, are “good to think with.” This approach is, of course, part also of a larger movement toward writing non-anthropocentric histories, histories that see things other than humans as equally valid subjects of inquiry.

Yet paradoxically, given the largely non-European origins of the modern horse (*equus caballus*), the new interdisciplinary approach to matters equine continues to marginalize the non-European and, in particular, the premodern. Notwithstanding the importance of “Eastern”—that is, Arabian, Persian, and North African—horses to the development of European thoroughbreds, the wider equine cultures of Eurasia and Africa remain sparsely represented in the new research, and there is little dialogue with existing, though often more disciplinarily bounded, literatures on horses in Eurasia and Africa.⁴ In the gap between these two scholarly tracks lie

² Landry, *Noble Brutes*, 14. See, e.g., Raber and Tucker, *Culture of the Horse*; Edwards, Enenkel, and Graham, *Horse as Cultural Icon*. Among the pioneering studies is Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests*.

³ Landry, *Noble Brutes*, 2–4.

⁴ For a broad selection of essays on the horse in Asia, including during the medieval period, see Fragner et al., *Pferde in Asien*; on the Chinese horse trade specifically, see Ptak, “Pferde auf See.” For those engaged in a deeper dialogue with the new European equine

important questions about the premodern and non-European equine cultures that contributed to the “equestrian saturation” of the early modern period and that made horses a truly “global interest” even up until the mid-twentieth century.⁵

In premodern South Asia, the study of matters equine is still a marginal enterprise. Aside from a small body of specialist literature scattered across economic, military, religious, and art history,⁶ horses most often figure as “extras” in the background of other narratives. As a first contribution to a new history of equine matters in South Asia, this essay focuses on the importation of horses by sea from the Middle East to Peninsular India—the area comprising the modern-day states of Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu—in the thirteenth century. In Arabic and Persian sources, horses imported by sea, *bahr* in Arabic, were often referred to as *bahrī*, “from or of the sea,” and this is the term I adopt here. Thirteenth-century sources describe a near-bankrupting consumption of expensive imported horses that I have chosen to call “horsemania,” in reference to “tulipmania”: the consumer passion for the newly-introduced Ottoman tulip that consumed seventeenth century Holland.⁷ If horses had been transported to South Asia by sea since at least the early centuries of the Common Era, the thirteenth century saw a boom in the volume of this trade and established patterns of circulation and consumption that continued into the early modern period and the Portuguese entry into this same trade.

scholarship, and covering both Eurasia and Africa, see Bankoff and Swart, *Breeds of Empire*, and Mitchell, *Horse Nations*. For the horse in pre-colonial Africa, see also Law, *Horse in West African History*; and for a useful overview of research, see Blench, “Prehistory.” Allsen’s *Royal Hunt* is far broader than the “royal hunt” of its title and offers an important panoramic view of the place of animals, including horses, within court cultures from antiquity to the modern period. Japanese scholars have been among those writing more connected histories of premodern equine cultures in Eurasia, although these publications have rarely been translated or referenced. See, in particular, Yokkaichi’s “Horses,” which is clearly indebted to Hikoichi Yajima’s pioneering work.

5 Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests*.

6 The literature on horses in South Asia is mostly focused on the early modern and modern periods: for example, Gommans, “Horse Trade,” and *Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*. Scholarship on earlier periods is mainly scattered across other histories, or approaches horses from more bounded disciplinary angles. An essential study, undertaken as its title suggests from the direction of economic and military history, is Digby’s *War-Horse and Elephant*; for the history of military technologies, see Deloche’s various studies based on iconographic evidence, e.g., *Le Cheval* and “Techniques militaires.” For the horse in popular culture, see Doniger, “Deconstruction of Vedic Horselore,” and also “Symbol in Search of an Object.”

7 The similarity in terminology is not necessarily intended to signal deeper parallels although, as Anne Goldgar’s study, *Tulipmania* has revealed, the phenomenon was often treated as an example of speculative folly.

Thus far, the boom in the maritime horse trade to South India in the thirteenth century has been written primarily as a commodity history or as part of Mongol history, since a significant part of this trade took place within larger networks of commercial and diplomatic exchange between Il Khanid Iran, the polities of South India, and Yuan China.⁸ This scholarship has largely been built around three contemporary, non-Indic sources: passages from the two Iranian geographical histories of the Il Khanid technocrat Hazrat-i Vassaf⁹ and the Il Khanid vizier Rashid al-Din,¹⁰ and the travel account of the Venetian merchant Marco Polo, itself heavily dependent on Il Khanid data.¹¹ There is no denying the critical importance of these

8 See Digby's discussion of the Il Khanid sources in *War-Horse and Elephant*, 29–33; Kauz, "Horse Exports," 133–34, and "Maritime Trade"; and Yokkaichi, "Horses," 90–91.

9 His personal name was Shihab al-Din 'Abdallah Sharaf Shirazi, although he is commonly known simply as Vassaf. His history of the Il Khanids, the *Tazjiyat al-amsar va tazjiyat al-as'ar*, commonly known as the *Ta'rikh-i vassaf*, was begun in 699/1300, and volume four was completed in 712/1312; the fifth volume took another fifteen years and was completed in 727 or 728/1327 or 1328: see Jackson, "Wassaf." Vassaf's history is vital for Iran and the Gulf at this period but has never benefitted from a critical edition of the Persian text; the Bombay lithographed edition of 1853 (reprinted in Teheran, 1959–60) remains the fundamental source. Thus far, the highly florid Persian text has resisted any full English translation, although summaries or paraphrases of the sections on South India are given by numerous authors, including Digby, *War-Horse and Elephant*, 30–31; see also Aubin, "Les Princes d'Ormuz," and Aigle, *Le Fârs sous la domination mongole*, 143–44, both of which are clearly derived in large part from Vassaf's text. While aware of its shortcomings, I rely here on the English translation: *Tazjiyatu-l amsar*, translated by Elliot and Dowson in *History of India*. For the broader history of Vassaf's text and its reception, see Pfeiffer, "Turgid History."

10 Rashid al-Din's *Ta'rikh al-hind* forms part of volume two of his larger *Jawami' al-tawarikh* and was completed in 1314. In this essay, I have relied on the facsimiles of the Persian and Arabic manuscripts of the *Ta'rikh al-hind* edited by Jahn as *Rashid al-Din's History*, as well as on rough English translations of key passages in Yule's "Endeavour." Rashid al-Din's and Vassaf's texts are clearly highly entangled in places, repeating key names and figures to the extent that the two sources are often quoted interchangeably, as if they were identical. The overlap is not surprising, not least because Rashid al-Din patronized Vassaf at the Il Khanid court; however, this information is presented within very different genres and discourses, complicating rather than corroborating our understanding of their relationship. Moreover, the genealogy of the borrowings is far from clear. In theory, Vassaf's account of South India precedes that of Rashid al-Din by about two years, being completed in 1312; however, this section of Vassaf's work is not stylistically coherent, and the passage including the hard data on the horse trade is in fact closer to Rashid al-Din's prose style. The problem will only be resolved when a critical edition of Vassaf's text is finally undertaken.

11 In this essay, I have used Gabriella Ronchi's bilingual edition of Polo's account, *Milione*, which gives both the Tuscan and Franco-Italian texts. I have followed the latter, based on Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 1116, which is judged to be one of the earliest

three sources, but this essay proposes that they have perpetuated an Irano-centric history, overly focused on one South Indian dynasty, that of the Pandyas, which had particularly close political and economic ties with Il Khanid Iran; this narrative is thus little interested in the subsequent lives of *bahrī* horses in India and the Indic equine cultures they joined, or in the wider importation of horses to the region. This essay accordingly argues for a more complex, multi-directional, and interconnected history of the horse in thirteenth-century South India, built on a broader reading of existing Il Khanid sources and the introduction of new textual and visual material from both indigenous and external sources. The sources presented here have all been edited and translated and have already contributed to other histories—of commodities and tax regimes, military technologies, chivalric cultures, or animal husbandry—but they have not previously been combined in a history of equine cultures.

This essay proceeds in two steps. It begins by broadening and complicating the history of the horse as a maritime commodity through the integration into the existing narrative of data from Yemeni and Indic textual sources, as well as Indic visual sources, to give a more rounded picture of the volume, patterns, and politics of the horse trade to Peninsular India in the thirteenth century. Prominent among these sources is a collection of late thirteenth-century documents from the customs house of Aden, documents which were only published in 2003, and visual representations of horses and their equipment on Indian hero stones and in temple sculpture. The second part of this essay moves beyond this revised commodity history and into the realm of equine histories proper, by arguing that the facts and figures pertaining to the horse trade as given in the influential accounts of Vasaf, Rashid al-Din, and Marco Polo were never primarily “about” trade but were instead part of larger discourses surrounding civilizational differences and values, the encounter between the Middle East and South Asia, or (in Polo’s case) Europe and non-European Others. The study of “equine cultures” rather than “horses” therefore underlines the extent to which, much as in eighteenth-century England, horses mediated cross-cultural encounters and were vehicles for larger discourses. Recognizing animals as a fundamental component of the material and intellectual exchanges that took place around the Indian Ocean opens new interpretive possibilities beyond their history as trade commodities. The second section also broaches the challenge of following *bahrī* horses into their new “Indian lives” and the problems that South Asian sources and South Asian historiography pose to this task. I explore the potential of inscriptional and iconographic evidence from the

and most complete manuscripts. All translations are my own, but I am grateful to Sharon Kinoshita for suggesting corrections where necessary. See also her essay in this issue.

Hoysala and the Kakatiya polities for future research into the place of horses within military networks and their translation into distinctive Indic chivalric cultures (see Map 3). I conclude by tracing the ways that these newly forged Indic equine cultures made reverse journeys back across the western Indian Ocean, entering Middle Eastern hippiatric texts as a distinct body of Indian equine knowledge.

The Horse in South Asia

The ubiquity of the horse today tends to obscure its limited original natural habitat and the very active human interventions that made it a global animal. Domesticated and wild horses are now found on four of five continents, excluding only Antarctica, but at around 6000 BCE the wild horse populations that seeded the first domesticated horses were found only on the steppes of eastern Europe and central Asia. It is from this relatively circumscribed area that the modern horse has spread globally in just eight millennia,¹² a remarkably rapid and powerful expansion in which premodern non-European actors played a central role. Horses are indigenous, and best adapt to semi-arid zones or steppe climates, dry but not desertic conditions that tend to support a short or scrubby vegetation of grasses or shrubs.¹³ Only a limited number of regions across the globe are able to sustain wild horse populations, and the horse's wider global spread would have been impossible without human initiatives to export it beyond, and sustain it outside, its original natural habitat—in effect, to domesticate it.

Archaeological evidence points to the introduction of the modern horse to the north of the Indian subcontinent from at least the first millennium BCE,¹⁴ yet the

12 The first horses evolved some fifty-five million years ago and multiple wild horse species coexisted on the North American plains and in Europe and Asia. While these North American species became extinct around ten thousand years ago, and species dwindled in western Europe, it was in central Asia that the modern horse *equus caballus* was first domesticated, probably round 4000 BCE. The diversity of the modern horse genome suggests that different wild horse populations were domesticated in different places. Although first raised for their meat and milk, evidence from eastern Russia and Kazakhstan shows horses being used to pull chariots by around 2000 BCE. By ca. 2000–1500 BCE, riding horses had become common in Iran and Afghanistan. See Levine, “Domestication.”

13 For the full definition of semi-arid climates, see Köppen, “Das geographische System.” For an updated world distribution map, see Peel, Finlayson, and McMahon, “Updated World Map.”

14 This is based on confirmed finds of horse bones at the site of Pirak in Pakistan, where terracotta horse figurines have also been found; see Van der Geer, *Animals in Stone*, 233. Earlier bones from Harappan sites have now been identified as those of Asiatic wild asses (*equus hemionus*) rather than modern horses (*equus caballus*).

Map 3.
South India Showing
Select Locations
and Features.

*Map created
 by the author.*



story of the horse in South Asia is far from being a neat narrative of gradual north-south diffusion. Finds of horse-bits in South Indian Megalithic (Iron Age) burials, broadly datable to around 800 to 300 BCE,¹⁵ as well as representations of horses and riders in Megalithic rock art, offer clear indications of the early presence and high status of these animals in the Peninsular south.¹⁶ Detailed understanding of the horse's diffusion across South Asia and its reception by, and translation into, the subcontinent's hugely varied cultures and environments remains a task hin-

15 The so-called Megalithic period remains inconsistently dated and is often extended into the first centuries of the Common Era. For a reference to the "clear attestation of horses" in Megalithic South India between 800–300 BCE, see Asouti and Fuller, *Trees and Woodlands*, 41.

16 To the best of my knowledge, the only survey of the archaeological material from South India is Leshnik's "Some Early Indian Horse-Bits" (now dated). For a recent overview of Megalithic rock art, see Blinkhorn, Taçon, and Petraglia, "Rock Art Research," 184 and 188.

dered by a neglected base of textual sources, scattered iconographic evidence, and all too little secure archaeological data. This neglect is particularly puzzling given the seminal position of the horse within Hinduism and Indic kingship; the horse sacrifice or *aśwamedha* was one of the most important religious rites described in the Vedas, the foundational texts of Hinduism, and was performed by kings into the medieval period to celebrate their paramouncy. Nevertheless, even at this early stage it is clear that the story of the horse in South Asia is multi-directional and often paradoxical, profoundly intertwined with that of the elephant, India's royal mount par excellence, and particularly complex in Peninsular India, where maritime supply routes from the Middle East and Bengal made the horse an Indian Ocean commodity from an early period.

South Asia largely lacks the extensive grasslands needed to sustain stable populations of strong and healthy horses. A variety of sources—from the *Kautilya Arthaśāstra* (a treatise on statecraft now agreed to date from the fourth century CE) to a fourteenth-century Sultanate history—affirm that the Punjab, Sind, and Saurashtra were the principal regions of the subcontinent with environments that could sustain stable horse populations and large-scale breeding.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, these are the very areas designated as semi-arid (*BSh* and *BSh*) in the Köppen-Geiger climate classification system.¹⁸ The climate beyond these areas was not suited to horse-keeping, fostering environments with little natural grass or fodder for equine diets while monsoonal humidity adversely affected horses' health, resulting in both a shortened lifespan and small, sickly offspring. Throughout the history of South Asia, any "indigenous" horse populations which became established were repeatedly supplemented by imported animals driven overland or shipped by sea. Horses driven overland from their native habitats in central Asia or the eastern Himalayas were referred to in medieval Arabic and Persian sources as *barri* or "horses from the land," while (as noted above) those shipped by sea were *bahrī* (Arabic) or *daryā'i* (Persian): literally "from the sea." It is not uncommon in medieval Indian texts to find horses discussed alongside pearls as one of the bounties of the ocean.¹⁹ Within this broader scenario, Peninsular India appears to have suffered a double disadvantage, in that its climate is especially

17 Barani, a fourteenth-century chronicler, discusses Sind and towns in the Punjab in a speech attributed to Sultan Balban which (Digby suggests) reflects specifically contemporary conditions. See Digby, *War-Horse and Elephant*, 21–22; the speech is also cited in Chakravarti, "Equestrian Demand and Dealers," 149. The history of Marwari and Kathiawari horses is far from clear, although both are believed to be partly interbred with Arabian horses.

18 See Peel, Finlayson, and McMahon, "Updated World Map," fig. 5.

19 A Silahara copper plate grant from Kohlapur, dated 1114 CE (*Śaka* 1037), describes the ocean giving pearls, fine cloth, and horses to the king; cited in Chauhan, "Arab Horses," 392.

challenging to horses, and it was often cut off from terrestrial supplies of *barri* horses by polities in central India. South Indian polities therefore found themselves much more dependent on animals imported by sea. We have records of Persian horses reaching Sri Lanka by sea as early as the sixth century CE,²⁰ but some of the earliest evidence suggests that horses were also being shipped from the head of the Bay of Bengal to the Tamil south in the third century CE.²¹ Nevertheless, epigraphic and textual references to Arab or Persian horses, many of which must have arrived by sea, only begin to appear regularly from the tenth and eleventh centuries onwards.²²

Horses never entirely displaced the indigenous elephant as the choice mount of Indian rulers, and elephants remained crucial in South Asian warfare; but in spite of the cost and difficulty of maintaining horses in much of the subcontinent, it is generally agreed that cavalries had become a staple of Indian warfare by the early medieval period. South Asian rulers took titles that expressed their command of diverse armies: the king was *Aśvapati* or *Advapati* (Lord of Horses), *Gajapati* (Lord of Elephants), and *Narapati* (Lord of Men).²³ The *Kautilya Arthaśāstra* (fourth century CE) already includes advice on the administration of royal stables and the care of horses,²⁴ and the first specifically hippiatric texts—Śalihotra's *Aśvayurvedasiddhanta* (Complete Ayurvedic System for Horses) and Nakula's *Aśvacikitsita* (Therapeutics of Horses)—are generally held to have been composed in the ninth and early eleventh centuries, respectively.²⁵ Yet in the popular reception of horses in Indian folklore, as Wendy Doniger has remarked, the horse was always perceived as non-Indian and ephemeral, the mount of conquerors from the Kushanas to the British, an animal that entered but could never truly establish itself in India.²⁶ It was always a little otherworldly, a semi-divine creature.

20 See Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*, 372.

21 Chakravarti, "Early Medieval Bengal," 205–07; Chakravarti marshals evidence from a Chinese source and an Indian seal both from the third century CE, together with passages from roughly contemporary Tamil *sangam* literature.

22 Pre-tenth-century Indian epigraphic materials and material culture certainly provide evidence for an earlier trade in horses from the west, but the scale of this is difficult to determine; see Chauhan, "Arab Horses."

23 To the best of my knowledge, the history of this title has not been traced but it was adopted, for example, by the Sena rulers of Bihar and Bengal (r. 1095–1204); see discussion in Majumdar, Pusalker, and Majumdar, *The Struggle for Empire*, 118–31, line 41.

24 Kautilya, *Arthaśāstra*, 146–50.

25 See Mazars, "Traditional Veterinary Medicine," 444. Jayadatta's *Aśvavaidyaka* is probably datable to the thirteenth century.

26 Doniger, "Deconstruction of Vedic Horselore," 76–77.

The *Bahrī* Horse Trade

Horse-Producing Regions and Supply Networks

The thirteenth century saw a major rise in the volume of the horse trade between the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf, and South India. The fact that horses were circulated into and around India by sea has long fascinated Western observers, not least Marco Polo; however, the shipping of large animals is not surprising in itself. Horses and animals far larger and more dangerous, such as elephants, were regularly transported around and across the Indian Ocean, and had been since at least the early first millennium CE. What is surprising are the multiple, corroborating references to this trade in sources from around the Indian Ocean rim, from Syria and the Yemen to China.²⁷ For the first time, horses emerge as a major commodity of maritime trade, circulating in apparently very large numbers.

In the 1290s, the Il Khanid historian and erstwhile fiscal administrator Vassaf al-Hazrat reports that 1,400 horses were due to be exported annually from the Gulf island of Kish (Qa'is) to Ma'bar, the Tamil region of South India then under the Pandya dynasty, together with as many as could be sourced from other Il Khanid tributaries elsewhere in the Gulf: areas such as Qatif, Lahsa (al-Ahsa), Bahrayn, Hormuz, and Qalhat. The price per head of horse was 220 dinars of red gold.²⁸ In his contemporary *Ta'rikh al-hind* (History of India), the Il Khanid vizier Rashid al-Din counts a total of ten thousands head of horse exported annually to Ma'bar and purchased at a cost of 2,200,000 dinars of red gold.²⁹ Marco Polo, whose journey to China via India is one of the best known accounts of the European mercantile encounter with Eurasia at this time, gives similar quantities, reporting that two thousand or more horses were purchased by each of the five Pandya kings each year, for a total of ten thousand horses.³⁰ Elsewhere in his account, Polo specifically mentions Qalhat in northern Oman as an export depot for good destriers (warhorses): "because know that from this country [...] large quantities of beautiful horses are taken to India, so many that you could hardly count them."³¹ The

27 Earlier references to the maritime circulation of horses can be counted on the fingers of two hands; see scattered references in Chakravarti, "Horse Trade and Piracy," "Early Medieval Bengal," and "Equestrian Demand and Dealers."

28 Vassaf, *Tazjiyatu-l amsar*, 33.

29 Rashid al-Din, *Ta'rikh al-hind*, 65.

30 The Pandya polity operated via a system of sub-regents, which often caused outside observers to describe it as governed by multiple kings.

31 Polo, *Milione*, 609: "de cest contree [...] se portent grant quantités de biaux chevaus en Y<n>de, si grant que a poine le poroit l'en contere."

consistency of the figures across these two last sources is remarkable and suggests that Polo had access to informants with reliable knowledge of the Il Khanid economy. A surprising aspect of the Il Khanid trade in horses with South India, given the hugely variable traits of individual animals, was the operation of a fixed price per head of horse. For the Il Khanid trade, both Vassaf and Rashid al-Din give the rate at 220 dinars of red gold per horse,³² Polo gives 500 *saje d'or*, which he states are worth more than 100 silver marks (*mars*).³³ According to both Il Khanid sources, the price was set on the condition that every horse was paid for, whatever its condition upon arrival, whether or not it survived the journey.

In Vassaf's text and Polo's, the Pandya kingdom (in what is now southern Tamil Nadu) emerges as a key market. As Polo observed during the course of his return west via the Pandya ports in the early 1290s, "in this kingdom no horses are born, and therefore all the treasure from the income (*rende*) that they have each year, or the greater part, is consumed in buying horses."³⁴ The final destination of the majority of these horses was the Pandya cavalry; as Vassaf observed, these horses were ridden by the troops of the Indians (*junūd-i hindū*) and used for war and equestrian exercises (*li-l-harb wa furusiyya al-maydān*).³⁵ Of course, these figures might be disputed as conventional medieval hyperinflation, and Simon Digby has wisely cited the advice of an early thirteenth-century Sultanate author Fakhr-i Mudabbir, to the effect that "the king or the commander of an army may know the numbers of horse and foot, he must say two or three times this number" when boasting about his troops.³⁶ Nevertheless, Rashid al-Din, as vizier, was well positioned to obtain fiscal information; while Vassaf, as a fiscal administrator in Fars for the Il Khanids, could have accessed, and perhaps even compiled, such figures. Vassaf was, furthermore, personally acquainted with members of the Tibi family who dominated this Il Khanid trade from their island emporium of Kish.³⁷ Moreover, these figures are altogether modest when compared to the hundreds

³² Vassaf, *Tazjiyatu-l amsar*, 33; and Rashid al-Din, *Ta'rikh al-hind*, 65.

³³ Polo, *Milione*, 556.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Vassaf, *Tazjiyatu-l amsar*, 34. Another rare reference to equestrian training comes from a Hoysala inscription dated 1140 CE, which mentions that the wife of the Hoysala ruler Vishnuvardhana, Bammala-devi, managed a "crown riding school" along with Ananthapala Sahani, the Master of the Royal Stables; see Coelho, *Hoysala Vamsa*, 254 (citing *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 5, inscription no. Ak 58).

³⁶ Cited in Digby, *War-Horse and Elephant*, 23.

³⁷ See Jackson, "Wassaf," 67–68; at one point Vassaf cites Jamal al-Din, suggesting a personal acquaintance.

of thousands of horses reportedly mobilized by Delhi Sultanate armies,³⁸ and not unreasonable when we consider, for example, that Jamal al-Din Tibi was able to present 1,000 geldings to the Mongol Il Khan Gazan in 1296, along with Chinese and Indian gifts.³⁹ The figures may even turn out to be remarkably consistent with subsequent trends, since the Portuguese horse trader Nuniz reported, in the first half of the sixteenth century, that the ruler of the large South Indian polity of Vijayanagara imported thirteen thousand head of horse per annum via the port of Hormuz.⁴⁰ Environments can only sustain animal populations of a certain size, and it may be that the surplus available for export was only ever in the region of ten to thirteen thousand head of horse per annum, after internal Iranian demand for horses was met.

Nevertheless, these figures represent only a portion of the total number of horse exports to South India in this period: horses were bred elsewhere than in Iran and the Gulf, and were also exported to other South Indian polities besides the Pandya. Departing from the heavily Irano-centric foci of Vassaf and Rashid al-Din, Marco Polo reports that the Pandya port of Qa'il (modern Kayalpattanam, on the Coromandel coast) received ships "laden with merchandise and horses" coming from Hormuz and Kish but also Aden, then under the Rasulid dynasty (r. 1229–1454), and "all of Arabia."⁴¹ A remarkable corpus of Rasulid customs documents from the port of Aden and dating to the 1290s confirm this, with one document explicitly underlining the scale of Pandyan purchases. Referring to the inhabitants as the *Sūliyān*—literally "Cholas," since the Chola polity (r. ca. 850–1279) had until recently been the dominant power across the region—this document repeatedly notes this people's desire for horses: "the *Sūliyān*, they are the people who wish to buy horses," and again, "in all of India few desire to buy horses as much as the *Sūliyān* desire it."⁴² The trilateral root used in both cases, RGHB, can be

³⁸ Figures from various sources are cautiously cited in Digby, *War-Horse and Elephant*, 23–25 and 49.

³⁹ Aubin, "Les Princes d'Ormuz," 92.

⁴⁰ Cited in Raychaudhuri, Habib, and Kumar, *Cambridge Economic History*, 118. Another remarkable continuity of practice is that the Vijayanagara ruler also paid for the horses whether or not they arrived alive or even healthy.

⁴¹ Polo, *Milione*, 577: "charchiés de mercandies e de chevaus" and "de toute l'Arabe."

⁴² Jazim, *Nur al-ma'arif*, 1:189: (*al-sūliyān wa hum ahl al-raghba fī shirā' al-khayl*) and 1:190 (*wa sā'ir al-hind qalīl 'an yarghubū fī shirā' al-khayl ka-raghba al-sūliyan*). These documents have recently been edited under the title *Nūr al-ma'arif* or *Light of Knowledge*, and they considerably deepen our understanding of the economic history of the period. Eric Vallet, in *L'Arabie marchande*, has worked most closely on those related to the horse trade, although they were also consulted by Hokoichi Yajima.

translated neutrally as “to wish” or “to desire” but might also be translated more forcefully as “to crave” or “to covet.” Whichever the translation, it is the particular purchasing enthusiasm of the *Sūliyān* that is underlined. One ultimate destination of these horses was undoubtedly the Pandya polity, as confirmed by Marco Polo. “All of Arabia” may also have included Syria, since a geographical treatise finished in 721/1321 by the Ayyubid prince and governor of Hamah Abu al-Fida’ includes the fact that horses from various places were brought to the capital city of Ma’bar,⁴³ while an account of the plunder of the Pandya royal stables in 1311 (by Delhi Sultanate forces) reports that the five thousand horses found there included *bahrī*, that is, Yemeni and *Shami* or Syrian animals.⁴⁴

Importantly, the Rasulid customs documents also point to other horse-purchasing polities in South India. One document lists the prices that horses fetched at the northern Malabari ports of Mangalore and Barkur (Faknur in the Arabic), the principal ports of the small coastal polity of the Alupas in what is now south Karnataka. At Mangalore, a horse fetched 400 *mīnī* (equivalent to 200 Egyptian gold *mithqāls*) and, at Faknur, a healthy horse without blemishes was worth 420 *mīnī*.⁴⁵ As Eric Vallet has noted, these two ports were most likely the transit points for horses destined for the cavalries of the Hoysala kingdom based on the Deccan plateau to the east, with its capital at Dwarasamudra (located on the western edge of the Deccan plateau, near modern-day Halebid). The northern Malabari ports offered the Hoysalas the most direct access to goods coming from the Indian Ocean system. The same pattern of horse supply, sometimes via the same ports and passes through the Western Ghats, operated under the Hoysala’s Vijayanagara successors and was eventually taken over by the Portuguese.⁴⁶

It is unclear what pricing system operated in the horse trade with Rasulid Yemen. The sources from Yemen are contradictory: some customs house documents describe an annual auction of horses at Aden and thus suggest that prices were set by market demand,⁴⁷ and the northern Malabari evidence suggests differ-

⁴³ Discussed in his *Taqwim al-buldan*, 402–03.

⁴⁴ Figures derived from Amir Khusraw Dihlavi’s *Khaza’in al-futuh*; cited by Digby, *War-Horse and Elephant*, 48.

⁴⁵ See Jazim, *Nur al-ma’arif*, 1:265; also discussed in Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande*, 570–71. One *mīnī* was worth half an Egyptian gold *mithqāl*, 570.

⁴⁶ For the Portuguese trade, see Loureiro, “Portuguese Involvement.” There is a general overview in Raychaudhuri, Habib, and Kumar, *Cambridge Economic History*, 117–19, which also includes the account of the trade with Vijayanagara by the Portuguese horse merchant Fernão Nunes, also known as Fernao Nuniz.

⁴⁷ Jazim, *Nur al-ma’arif*, 1: 505; discussed in Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande*, 223–25.

ent prices at different ports, while another document fixes the price of a horse at 800 dinars, stating that “horses worth 2,000 dinars, 1,000 and 500, 600, 400, 300, 200, all are sold for 800 [dinars], which has become a customary rule.”⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the precise mechanics of exchange for the Yemen are well understood thanks to Eric Vallet’s work on the Rasulid customs documents. These indicate that the dynasty operated a highly centralized system, at least in theory: the kingdom’s only sanctioned horsefair took place once a year in Aden during the month of August, a period known as *mawsim al-khayl*, the “horse season.”⁴⁹ Those purchasing horses on behalf of Indian polities are described simply as *nakhuda al-hind*, the ship-owners and great merchants of India, and they settled their purchases and the taxes and dues, half in coin (using silver dirhams) and half in unsewn silk textiles (*fuwwat harīr*).⁵⁰ Vallet has also demonstrated how problematic the payment of such large sums of silver was for Indian buyers and has mapped the hugely complex chain of interregional exchanges, from China through to Egypt, which underlay these purchases.⁵¹ A comparable network analysis of the horses-for-gold system operating between Ilkhanid Iran and Pandya south India is long overdue.

The Rasulid documents do not record the numbers of horses exported annually to India, or the annual revenue from this trade, but they do specify where some of the animals shipped from Aden were raised. Notwithstanding the fame of the “Arabian” horse, only select regions in the Arabian Peninsula are suitable for horsebreeding, and one document suggests that Yemeni horses were mainly bred on the great plains around San’a and Damar to the north of Aden, and on the high coastal plateau of Hasi to its east.⁵² These regions are comparatively small compared to the semiarid regions found across Iran and Central Asia; so small, in fact, that they are not represented on current Köppen-Geiger maps of the Arabian Peninsula, and they cannot have sustained horse populations on the same scale.⁵³ Although the modern notion of “breed” does not translate back to these prescientific, premodern milieus, it is clear that these areas produced a variety of horses. Polo gives by

48 Jazim, *Nar al-ma’arif*, 1:189–90; discussed in Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande*, 226.

49 Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande*, 223–24.

50 Ibid., 226.

51 See Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande*, 225–27, building on the work of Yokkaichi, “Horses,” 91–93, and earlier work by Hikoichi Yajima. Compare this to the earlier horse trade in Oman as described in Zhao Rugua’s *Description of All Barbarians* (ca. 1225 CE), where horses, pearls, and dates are noted as being bartered for cloves, cardamom seeds, and camphor; cited in Kauz, “Horse Exports,” 131.

52 For more on networks of horse supply to Aden, see Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande*, 373–78.

53 Peel, Finlayson, and McMahon, “Updated World Map,” fig. 8.

far the most detailed account of horse exports from the Arabian Peninsula, noting that merchants from Aden carry to India “many beautiful Arab destriers [war-horses] of great value, from which the merchants turn a great profit.”⁵⁴ From Shihr “merchants carry many good destriers and many good mixed-breeds [*chevalz de Il selles*] to India, which are very expensive and very valuable.”⁵⁵ Further north, at Dhofar, “they bring many good Arabian destriers from other countries,” which profit merchants greatly.⁵⁶ It is unclear at present where the horses exported from Shihr and Dhofar were raised, but it seems clear that Rasulid Yemen would have been unable to supply Peninsular India on the same scale as Iran.

Unfortunately, Indic sources for Peninsular India are almost totally silent about the horse economy and seldom specify where horses originated, let alone in what numbers.⁵⁷ We are left with a string of general references to a contemporary trade in horses all along the western seaboard of the subcontinent, from Solanki Gujarat (where a Jain text describes the merchant minister Vastupala supervising the unloading of horses from ships at the port of Cambay)⁵⁸ to Sri Lanka (where a mid-thirteenth-century Chinese source, the *Description of the Barbarous Peoples*, mentions horses traded at the island’s ports).⁵⁹ However, we should not forget to look east for evidence. Polities such as the Pandyas and their northerly neighbors the Kakatiyas controlled ports on the Coromandel coast that were more immediately tied into Bay of Bengal maritime networks. While horses from the Arabian Peninsula and Iran certainly reached Pandya ports via the maritime route, we

54 Polo, *Milione*, 605: “maint biaux destrer arabien de grant vailance, dont les mercaant en font grant profit.”

55 Polo, *Milione*, 606: “portent les mercant mant buens detrier et manti buens chevalz de Il selles en Endie, que molt sunt chier e de grant vailance;” cf. Sainte-Palaye et al., *Dictionnaire historique*, 9:378, “cheval etre deux selles”: a horse that is neither a courtault (work horse) nor a destrier. (The Tuscan version of Polo’s text is much shorter here and does not include the same amount of detail as included in the Franco-Italian.)

56 Polo, *Milione*, 608: “il hi portent maint buen destrer arabien [e] d’autres contree.”

57 This is in sharp contrast to northern India, where Delhi Sultanate sources provide the bulk of material for Digby’s seminal study *War-Horse and Elephant*.

58 See the *Prabandhacintamani* of Merutunga, cited in Chakravarti, “Equestrian Demand and Dealers,” 159.

59 See Chau Ju-Kua, *Chu-Fan-Chi*, 73. Some Middle Eastern horses even traveled the entire length of the sea route to eastern China. See, for example, Yokkaichi, “Horses,” 89–90, citing white horses brought back to China from Hormuz by the Chinese merchant emissary Yang Shu and a “western horse” presented by the Muslim merchant of Quanzhou Muhammad Andi to the Yuan court; the merchant’s residence at the eastern port city suggests that the horse was transported by sea rather than driven overland.

should not discount the possibility that these polities also turned to other, closer horse-breeding areas. Important research by Ranabir Chakravarti and Bin Yang has suggested that horses from the eastern Himalayas and southwestern China entered the Bay of Bengal trading system.⁶⁰ The region of Karambattan in the eastern Himalayas (likely corresponding to modern-day Bhutan or the fringes of Tibet) raised small hardy horses, what we would now term “ponies,” known simply as *kohī* (mountain) horses.⁶¹ The unique climate of Yunnan in southwestern China had allowed horse husbandry to develop there from as early as the sixth century BCE. Horses from both regions were led into northern India via Bengal and, according to Chakravarti, were often re-exported to the eastern Deccan and even onwards to eastern Chinese ports.⁶²

While the strongest evidence for this trade begins in the fifteenth century, there is scattered earlier evidence for similar patterns, notably for the thirteenth century, when Marco Polo again provides important testimony by observing that Amu (Yunnan) produced horses and oxen that were traded into India via Pagan and Bengal.⁶³ Although it is likely that the larger horses from the Middle East were considered better suited to warfare than Himalayan and Yunnanese “ponies,” we cannot exclude the Bay of Bengal system as a source of horses for the Kakatiyas and even for the Pandyas to their south. When the armies of the Delhi Sultanate conquered the Kakatiya capital of Warangal in 1309, the Kakatiya ruler Rudradeva reportedly surrendered twenty thousand horses, a mix of *kohī* ponies from the Himalayas and *bahrī* horses, in this case almost certainly Arabian and Persian horses that had reached South Asia by sea.⁶⁴ A proportion of these animals would certainly have been acquired as booty in engagements with neighboring polities—this was always the fastest and cheapest way to obtain new horses, as the very surrender of these animals to the conquering forces of the Delhi Sultanate illustrates—but we should not dismiss the possibility that a proportion of these

60 See Chakravarti, “Early Medieval Bengal,” and Yang, “Horses, Silver, and Cowries,” 294–300; the latter offers a comprehensive discussion of this trade incorporating Chakravarti’s evidence for Bengal.

61 Digby is careful to underline that these mountain ponies were different from so-called *Tangana* (*Tanghan*) horses, with which they are often confused; *War-Horse and Elephant*, 47.

62 Chakravarti, “Early Medieval Bengal,” 201–02. Important visual evidence not cited by Chakravarti are representations of Southeast Asian, perhaps Thai, horse traders depicted together with horses and boats in late sixteenth-century murals from the temple at Tiruputaimarutur in the Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu; reproduced in Deloche, “Etudes.”

63 Cited in Yang, “Horses, Silver, and Cowries,” 300; from another edition of Polo’s travels, see Polo, *Travels*, 10.

64 Amir Khusraw Dihlavi, cited in Digby, *War-Horse and Elephant*, 48.

animals had also reached the Kakatiya polity as direct imports via the western and the eastern Indian Ocean.

As all these examples underline, the large number of horses needed to supply Peninsular India had to be sourced from a wide area and through networks running deep into the hinterlands of the actual shipping points. When Vassaf mentions horses from Qa'is and "the islands of Fars, Qatif, Lahsa [al-Ahsa], Bahrayn, Hormuz, Qalhat," these were simply assembly points, perhaps formal horse fairs, for animals that had been raised across the grasslands of Arabia and Iran. Indeed, "sea horses" first enter Polo's narrative in his description of the kingdom of Persia and the importance of Kish and Hormuz in the export of good Persian horses to India.⁶⁵

The Birth of the Bahri Trade

Multiple sources, from Syria and the Yemen to China, point to the emergence of the horse as a major international commodity in Indian Ocean trade to Peninsular India by the later thirteenth century, an expenditure so important, according to some accounts, that it consumed the greater part of state revenues. While this trade certainly did not start *ex nihilo*, fixing a more precise "when" and "why" to this horsemania is by no means easy. Premodern sources for the Middle East and South Asia usually yield quantitative data only reluctantly—hence the attraction of the much repeated Il Khanid figures—but long-term fluctuations in the trade of a particular commodity are even more difficult to capture. Of all the sources noted above, only Vassaf gives some historical perspective on the horse trade from Fars and the Gulf, based on his knowledge of trade under the Salghurid Atabek of Fars, Abu Bakr (r. 1226–60), who was, for the latter part of his reign, a Mongol tributary.⁶⁶ Vassaf notes that according to "authentic writers," ten thousand horses a year were already being exported to Ma'bar as well as to Kambayat (Cambay, the principal port of the Solanki kingdom) and other areas of India at this time for the same price of 220 dinars and under the same terms.⁶⁷ This is the clearest suggestion that the Tibi merchant princes of Kish may have taken over an existing trade agreement. If Vassaf is correct in this, this large-scale trade was already several generations old by the time he described it in the early fourteenth century. The

⁶⁵ Polo, *Milione*, 342.

⁶⁶ See discussion of the conflicting evidence in Aigle, *Le Fārs sous la domination mongole*, 101n241.

⁶⁷ Vassaf, *Tajziyat al-amsar*, 33. Vassaf gives no indication of the pattern of horse trade between Abu Bakr's death in 1260 and the Tibis' takeover in 1292; however, Aigle usefully sketches the outlines of a period of regional instability even if the consequences of this for the horse trade are unknown (*Le Fārs sous la domination mongole*, 113–36).

fact that the various polities of Fars were never conquered by the Mongols but entered tributary relationships with them would certainly have encouraged continuity in local economic patterns.

If a large-scale maritime trade in horses does go back to the mid- or even early thirteenth century, what had perhaps changed by the end of that century, at least with regards to the Gulf, was the distribution network. The mid-thirteenth-century Gulf trade, as described by Vassaf, supplied ten thousand horses per annum to a variety of locations in India, including Gujarat; however, by the early fourteenth century Vassaf and Rashid al-Din appear to describe a trade of around the same volume but this time apparently focused exclusively on supplying the Pandya polity. If such a southwards shift is confirmed, it may reflect the growth of the maritime trade route from the 1270s onwards due to Chagadai disruptions in central Asia, increased contact between Yuan China and Il Khanid Iran via this maritime route, and South India's growing importance as a participant in these networks.⁶⁸ Although the Mongol conquest of Iran eventually encouraged and facilitated the export of horses to South India by sea, that does not explain in itself the rise in demand. A number of historians, from Simon Digby to Ralph Kauz, have suggested a clear correlation between the general growth of the *bahrī* horse trade in the thirteenth century and the challenge posed by the large cavalries of the Delhi Sultanate, which led to a "general structural militarization of the Indian subcontinent."⁶⁹ *Bahrī* horses, it seems, were part of a wider South Asian "arms race" precipitated by the Ghurid conquest of northern India in the late twelfth century. Digby carried out probably the most thorough assessment of military technologies and supplies for late twelfth-century India and concludes that there existed a general parity in military technologies between the Delhi Sultanate forces and their Indian opponents; for Digby, the sole factor that explains the success of the Delhi Sultanate's forces is the larger numbers of mounted troops, particularly archers, they could muster.⁷⁰ Digby's thesis is strongly supported by evidence from a variety of South Asian sources and would explain why horses became the single most important military import for other South Asian polities, notably those of the Peninsular

68 This Mongol period maritime axis is explored especially thoroughly by Kauz, "Horse Exports," and by Yokkaichi, "Horses." South India's new centrality in these exchanges is certainly seen in the Tibis' strategic positioning within the Pandya polity, but also in the over thirty diplomatic missions exchanged between Yuan China and South Indian polities between 1272 and 1296; see Sen, "Yuan Khanate and India," 302.

69 Kauz, "Horse Exports," 131–32: horse export became "a major component of the Indian Ocean trade from the thirteenth century onwards."

70 Digby, *War-Horse and Elephant*, 13–22; see also the discussion of warfare at this period in the introduction to Gommans and Kolff, *Warfare and Weaponry*, 1–42.

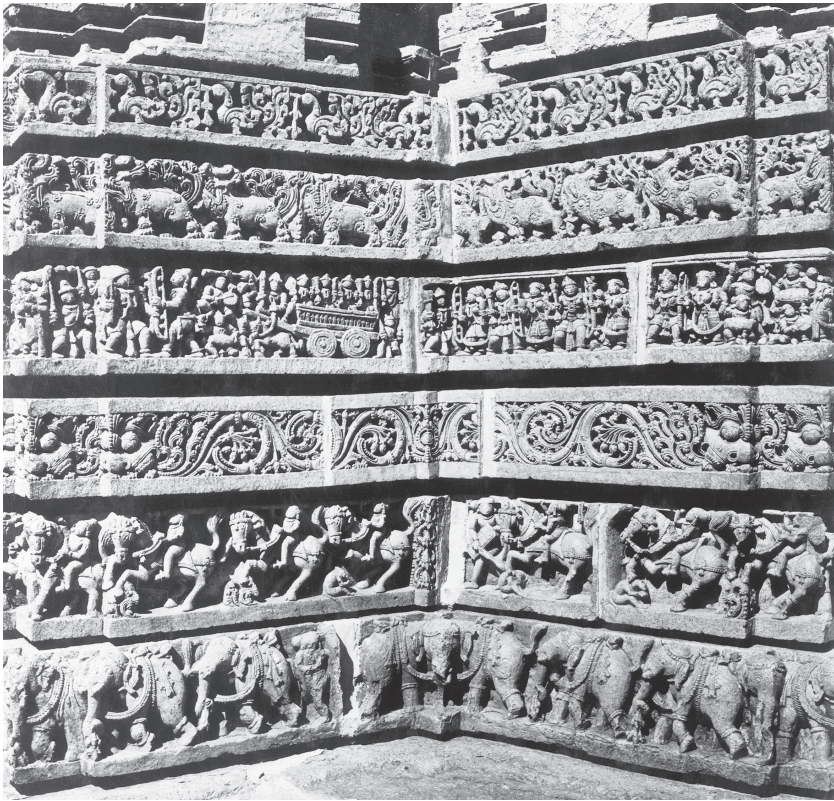


Figure 5. View of the Lower Level of the Kesava Temple at Somanathapur in Karnataka, Hoysala, ca. 1268 CE. In a distinctive Hoysala iconographic innovation, a frieze of mounted horsemen has been added to the more traditional repertory of elephant, goose, and makara friezes. *Photograph reproduced courtesy of the American Institute of Indian Studies, Accession No 15366.*

south, which were disadvantaged by both climate and distance from horse producing areas.

Nevertheless, horses alone do not win battles: they are surrounded by larger assemblages of people and things, and it is this complex of factors that makes winning cavalry units. There is much we still do not know about the chronology of militarization in the Peninsular south and the place of horses within this. Indic sources will have an important role to play in clarifying this even if, at present, their use poses many challenges. Epigraphy, the mainstay of so much premodern South Asian history, has not yet been combed systematically for references to horses in the Peninsular south, while visual evidence is unevenly documented: some sites have been meticulously photographed and recorded, others are known

only through brief and often passing textual references, and nearly all are poorly studied. In the future, systematic surveys of both types of evidence may be able to uncover patterns that substantially clarify when and where in Peninsular India *bahrī* horses first became a major imported commodity, and when new equine technologies and perhaps skilled humans accompanied them. For the moment, the evidence we have is suggestive rather than conclusive.

Perhaps some of the strongest evidence for understanding changes to the flow of horses in the thirteenth century is iconographic: Hoysala temple sculpture offers rich material. Friezes of prancing horses or mounted combat appear suddenly on the basement walls of Hoysala temples from the early twelfth century onwards, where they are integrated with a more traditional repertory of elephant, lion, or *makara* friezes (Figure 5). Horse friezes were an iconographic innovation unique to Hoysala sculptors, a pointer to the high status of the horse and cavalry within that society. However, the first half of the thirteenth century stands out as a particularly intense period of horse representation; of the twelve temples with equine friezes studied by the military historian Jean Deloche, ten date between 1219 and 1268 CE,⁷¹ suggesting that horses had become, or were becoming, far more prominent and valued in Hoysala society at this period. Within this time-frame, the middle of the century stands out as particularly significant. As Deloche demonstrates, Hoysala sculpture began to represent a number of distinctively Turkic-Islamic equine technologies, such as stirrups, horseshoes, horse armor, and (most importantly) a new type of saddle with pommel and cantle that held the rider more securely than previous designs. The historian Philip Wagoner has suggested that these representations show “the first step in the adaptation of Turkic-Islamicate military technologies by local Indic military elites,” resulting from the Turkic conquest of northern India.⁷² Yet the Hoysala had not yet engaged the Delhi Sultanate in battle directly at this period, suggesting different mechanisms of exchange. In many scholarly discussions, direct military engagement is understood to be a necessary prequel to the transfer of military technologies, via captured horses, horse equipment, or fighting men; and yet in the Peninsular south these changes appear to have occurred prior to direct military engagement.

71 Among the earliest examples is the Kesava temple at Beluru (Hasan district in the modern Karnataka state), dated to 1117 CE. See the (by no means comprehensive) table in Deloche, “Techniques militaires,” 149. A proper evaluation would require a complete inventory of Hoysala temples and their decoration, and an investigation perhaps of any relationships between the patron and the chosen iconography.

72 Wagoner, “Harihara, Bukka, and the Sultan,” 317.



Figure 6. Hero Stone Showing a Single Mounted Horseman in Battle, from Tripurantakam, Kurnool District, Andhra Pradesh (Kakatiya Period, Thirteenth Century CE). This imagery is more commonly seen in western India and indicates the distinctive regional equine culture of the Andhra region at this period. *Photograph reproduced with kind permission of Professor R. Chandrasekhara Reddy.*

It is important to bear in mind that incidental evidence for economic and technological phenomena such as this can never be entirely reliable. Visual representations follow their own conventions, fashions, and timescales: they do not represent the “real” world, let alone aim to supply economic historians with usable quantitative data, and it is impossible to gauge at present the speed at which Hoysala sculptors reacted to social and technological changes.⁷³ The introduction of a new equine iconography and its increased use arguably tell us more about the changing status of the horse in Hoysala society or its changed visibility than about the numbers of animals imported or about the timing of technological transfers. Deloche also did not systematically examine evidence from Hoysala hero stones, which are clearly iconographically related to temple friezes, and such a study might help refine or revise his thesis (for a beautifully preserved Kakativa example, see Figure 6).⁷⁴ Nevertheless, if this interpretation of the Hoysala evidence is correct, it suggests a rise in the presence and status of the horse during the first half of the thirteenth century with increased adoption of certain Turkic-Islamic military technologies from the middle of the century. This timeframe correlates broadly with Vassaf’s information about a large-scale horse trade from the Gulf to South Asia under Atabek Abu Bakr.

The combined evidence further suggests that knowledge of military technologies circulated within South Asia and between South Asia and surrounding regions before any military confrontation, indicating a phenomenon of preemptive rather than reactive technological change. Wagoner’s work on the fifteenth-century Decan has certainly underlined the mobility of military elites, notably Turkic Muslim nobles, across political and religious frontiers, and it is perhaps thanks to similar mobilities that Turkic-Islamic equine technologies traveled south through the Peninsula.⁷⁵ We should also not forget that a wider Turkic-Islamic equine culture had established itself across much of the central and eastern Islamic world since the first large-scale use of mounted Turkish slave soldiers by the Abbasid Caliphs in the ninth century. Subsequent waves of Turkic invasion consolidated the Turkic contribution to Islamic culture. In the thirteenth century, the “new” horse furnishings represented in Hoysala sculpture were as common in Iran and

73 Digby maintains that stirrups had been introduced across India much earlier, at least by the mid-tenth century; *War-Horse and Elephant*, 13–14. This raises the question of why stirrups appear so much later on Hoysala sculptures.

74 The potential here is huge. In *Memorial Stones*, Settar and Sontheimer document 609 hero-stones from Karnataka, of which 363 are of the Hoysala period.

75 See Wagoner, “Fortuitous Convergences”; for the visual evidence, see Michell, “Migrations and Cultural Transmissions.”

the Arabian Peninsula as in the Delhi Sultanate. It is entirely possible, therefore, that these technologies were also transmitted to the Hoysala through the trade in *bahrī* horses from the Gulf or Yemen. Indian *nākhūdas* at Aden's annual horse fair certainly came into direct contact with Turkic-Islamic equine cultures. The diplomatic exchanges that accompanied the wider Indian Ocean trade may also have assisted in the circulation of equine technologies, as it was common to send fully caparisoned horses as diplomatic gifts. Although we have as yet no concrete examples of gifted horses from thirteenth-century Middle Eastern or Indic sources, the diplomatic activity of the period is well attested, and such a scenario is entirely possible.

This is fragile data, but it points a way forward. Nevertheless, it remains important to calibrate both epigraphic and visual evidence carefully, and to be aware of their fundamentally recalcitrant natures. One of the most paradoxical aspects of horsemanship in thirteenth-century South India remains the fact that, in spite of the Pandyas' clear preeminence as importers of *bahrī* horses according to Yemeni, Iranian, and European sources, neither epigraphic nor visual sources hint at that dominance. References to horses as commodities and taxable items appear to be almost nonexistent in Pandya inscriptions: the historian Nilakantha Sastri is able to signal only one reference to a horse trader from southern Kerala in his history of the polity.⁷⁶ Nor did horses enter Pandya visual culture. They are not represented in temple sculpture or on hero stones, the memorials carved and often inscribed to commemorate dead warriors. Without the Middle Eastern sources and Marco Polo, there would be little trace of the Pandya consumption of *bahrī* horses.

Interconnected Equine Cultures

Equine Knowledge and Civilizational Encounters

The facts and figures on the *bahrī* horse trade provided by Vassaf, Polo, and others are rare for the thirteenth century, and it is perhaps no surprise that historians have clung to them. In so doing, however, they have largely ignored the discursive contexts in which these facts are situated. Restoring this data to its original context offers a remarkably effective means of using these sources as part of a broader history of equine cultures and illustrates the extent to which, well before the eighteenth century, horses were vehicles for other ideas. In the case of both Vassaf and Marco Polo, the fate of horses in South India offers each the opportunity to develop complex and contradictory discourses that attribute to horses an almost emblematic civilizational role.

⁷⁶ See Nilakantha Sastri, *Pandyan Kingdom*, 192 (no. 161 of 1907).

In Polo's narrative, observations about horses are woven into a larger narrative fabric intent on pointing to Oriental, sometimes specifically Muslim, excess and ignorance. Although horses feature only briefly in his description of the main shipment point of Hormuz, the context in which they feature is highly significant: horses are included in a longer, disparaging description of the coir-sewn boats so typical of the western Indian Ocean. Because "they," the Muslim merchants or perhaps the Indian shipmasters, do not have iron nails, the boats are sewn, and they are "very bad and many founder"; the loaded merchandise is simply covered with hides and onto this "they put the horses which they carry to India to sell."⁷⁷ According to Polo, Indian Ocean boat-building techniques are primitive, and understanding of lading methods is similarly backward. This passage sets the tone for the longest discussion of the *bahrī* trade, embedded in Polo's description of the kingdom of the Pandyas. Having told his readers that this kingdom consumes most of its revenues on buying horses, and that these are good, valuable animals, he continues:

they all die, because they [the Indians] do not have ostlers [*marreschaus*],⁷⁸ nor know how to care for them, but they die though neglect. And I tell you that the merchants who carry these horses for sale do not allow to go, nor send, any ostlers, because they [the merchants] want these kings' horses to die.⁷⁹

Indian ignorance of horse care is here compounded by the exploitative practices of merchants from Muslim lands who deliberately impede knowledge circulation in order to ensure the early deaths of these animals. Eastern horses were rare luxuries in Europe, even into the sixteenth century, and to squander rare animals on such a scale—furthermore, transporting them in primitive ships—must have been shocking to Polo's readers, perhaps to Polo himself. Polo's narrative anticipates many themes familiar from later Orientalist discourse, and this very familiarity has perhaps aided an uncritical acceptance in later Western scholarship of the idea that the *bahrī* horse trade was impractical and even foolhardy, and that Indians did not know how to care for horses.

77 Polo, *Milione*, 348: "Lor nes sunt mout mauves et ne perisent aseç"; "hi metent les cavaus qui portent en Yndie a vendre."

78 At this period, the *maréchal* was responsible for all aspects of the care of horses, including the treatment of ailments and shoeing, and even their sale.

79 Polo, *Milione*, 348: "tuit morent elz, por ce que il ne ont marreschaus, ne ne li sevent costoir, mes se morent por mal garde. E si voç di que les mercaant que portent cesti chavaus a vendre, ne[n] hi laisen ale[r] ne ne i moient nul marescaus, por ce qu'il vult que les chavaus se morent aseç a cesti rois."

The Persian chronicler Vassaf offers a very different perspective on the problem of horse mortality in South India and one that, again, must be situated within its original context. Vassaf's focus is not the *bahrī* horse trade per se; rather, his discussion centers on the Tibi merchant family and is itself situated within a highly florid account of the "marvels and excellences" of the country of Hind—a discourse that betrays a clear lineage in the well-established tradition of the *'ajā'ib*, the "wonders," of non-Islamic lands.⁸⁰ With the stock phrase "it is a strange thing," he turns to peculiarly Indian practices of horse management, depicting what Finbarr Barry Flood has described elsewhere as a "tospy-turvy" Indian world where horses are neither fed, exercised, or ridden according to expected Middle Eastern practices.⁸¹ The result is that "in a short time the most strong, swift, fresh, and active horses become weak, slow, useless, and stupid."⁸² Yet whereas Polo understands this to be a symptom of a wider Oriental backwardness, for Vassaf the fate of horses is ultimately explained as part of the divine natural order: it is predominantly "this climate"—literally, "water and air" (*in āb va havā*)—which renders horses "exceedingly weak and altogether worn out and unfit for riding,"⁸³ and so explains the constant demand in South Asia. Vassaf concludes that

their loss is not without its attendant advantages, for it is a providential ordinance of God that the western [world] should continue to want eastern products, and the eastern world western products, and that the north should with labor procure the goods of the south, and the south be furnished in like manner with commodities brought in ships from the north.⁸⁴

Horses are one of the commodities that mediate communication between the quarters of the earth, and the peculiar practices of their trade and "consumption" in south India are part of the "marvels and excellences" of the country of Hind.

In both Polo and Vassaf, then, and yet in radically different ways, horses are vehicles for larger discourses about civilizational differences and values: about the encounter between Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia; and between Hindu, Muslim and Christian cultures.

80 Vassaf, *Tazjiyatu-l amsar*, 32.

81 Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 6.

82 Vassaf, *Tazjiyatu-l amsar*, 33.

83 *Ibid.*, 34.

84 *Ibid.*

Finding “Matters Equine” in South Indian Sources

The seemingly obvious military destination of *bahrī* horses and their apparently brief Indian lives—mentioned by Polo, Vassaf, Rashid al-Din, and again in a later Yemeni treatise⁸⁵—have hitherto limited the discussion of the reception and translation of horses into Peninsular India. Yet archaeological and visual evidence going back to the Megalithic period in South India indicates that, in the thirteenth century, these animals supplied already ancient regional equine cultures, even if the precise features and chronologies of these await further study. The problems that Indic sources pose for writing commodity histories of horses are understandably compounded in the attempt to move beyond this to broader equine histories. As noted above, epigraphic sources have not been systematically explored across the Peninsula, and little is known about the local circulation and eventual translation of the classic Indian hippiatric treatises of Śalihotra and Nakula, while literary sources that might write the Indian lives of *bahrī* horses have similarly not been systematically sifted for equine references. Such a project would of necessity be collaborative, demanding at the very least expertise in Sanskrit, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, and Telugu.

One example from the Tamil literature illustrates the potential of such material. A thirteenth-century narrative of the life of the ninth-century Tamil saint Manikkavacakar, the *Tiruvilaiyatal puranam* (The Divine Plays of Lord Shiva), sets the story of his entry into the religious life in a markedly contemporary, thirteenth-century context.⁸⁶ Manikkavacakar was chief minister to the Pandya monarch and as such was sent to a port to purchase horses for the royal stables. En route, the future saint encountered Śiva in the form of a guru and decided to devote himself to the Śaiva cause. Returning to court without money or horses, Manikkavacakar was duly punished. Later, however, Śiva arrived at court “in the guise of a foreign horseman leading a herd of fine horses to the Pantian’s stable.”⁸⁷ The “horses,” however, were really wild jackals, and later they reverted to their original form and caused havoc within the palace. The story offers a subaltern view of both the wastefulness of the Pandya ruler’s spending on horses and the foreign dominance

85 The Rasulid sultan al-Malik al-Mujahid (r. 1321–62) also authored a hippiatric text in which he noted that Arab horses did not breed in India and had a shorter lifespan; reported in Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals*, 266.

86 This story comes from the *sthalapurana* of the Minakshi Temple in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, which depicts sixty-four stories about Siva, four of which are about Siva and Manikkavacakar. The story is paraphrased in multiple publications, but for a faithful summary of the Tamil text, see Cutler, *Songs of Experience*, 184. I am grateful to Leah Comeau for suggesting this story.

87 Ibid.

of that trade, but it also reprises the idea that horses were alien, terrifying creatures. Jackals in India are closely associated with death because of their scavenging of corpses.

Material sources are even more patchily documented and studied than such informative anecdotes. Surveys and excavations of elite architectural complexes and urban spaces have rarely looked for evidence of the material culture of horse riding and horse keeping (such as stables and training or parade areas). Also, because monsoon climate conditions complicate the survival of all but the most stable materials (such as stone and ceramics), faunal remains are rarely collected and researched during archaeological excavations. Compounding this problem, archaeologists have displayed a clear bias in favor of the Megalithic and Early Historic periods. Yet the work carried out at a regional or dynastic level provides models that might be transferable to the wider canvas of the Peninsular south. Although Deloche's work has focused on using visual sources to index military-technological change, it has also traced the development of a unique visual culture of equine representation among Hoysala craftsmen and, we must presume, their patrons. Further work on Hoysala hero stones and on equine references in Hoysala epigraphy would not only refine Deloche's principal thesis but provide a working model for transfer to other regions and polities—in the process revealing regional interactions, convergences, and divergences. Even more significant is the work of historian Cynthia Talbot on the Kakatiya polity, its military networks, and what she terms the "martial ethos" in medieval South Indian society. Together with the work of a small number of other historians, this work challenges prevailing models of medieval Indic kingship by emphasizing the place of military action and training in South Asian society.⁸⁸ For Talbot, the models of so-called "dharmaic kingship" favored by Western scholars fail to take account of the truism that "political power has a physical basis in armed might."⁸⁹ The central importance of cavalry units in the Kakatiya army and the elite status of those warriors inevitably makes horses a recurring leitmotif of Talbot's study. Although she works solely from Kakatiya epigraphic sources and does not engage with the rich body of equine representations on contemporary Kakatiya hero stones (Figure 6), Talbot provides valuable new models for the writing of broader equine histories across the Peninsular south.

88 See also the essay by Yadava, "Chivalry and Warfare."

89 Talbot, *Precolonial India*, 144. From *dharma* (virtuous duty), this model sees the king as bound to protect his realm and ensure the peaceful co-existence of those living within it.

Horses, Horse Merchants, and the “Web of Military Associations”

Talbot’s research has underlined the importance of thinking of polities as military networks:

because a king’s own martial skills and his ability to recruit and retain the loyalties of other fighting men were essential to his survival, the web of military associations underlying every state system should be prominent in our models of [...] medieval polity.⁹⁰

Her analysis focuses on the personal networks forged among the Kakatiya ruler, regional governors, local chiefs, and their supporters, but it is clear that other human networks supported the maintenance of power, notably through access to essential military supplies. If understanding of the place of horses and horse merchants in the Kakatiya’s “web of military associations” must await further study, Talbot’s model translates well to the more abundant data we have for some of their contemporaries. The Indian *nākhūdas* who operated as middlemen in the trade between Rasulid Yemen and the Hoysalas can be seen as fundamental participants in the Hoysala’s own “web of military associations” through their participation in the purchase and transport of military supplies, notably horses. South Asian models of merchant activity (like models of kingship) have tended to neglect the prominence of armed conflict in merchant lives. The highly competitive and often violent character of Indian Ocean trade meant that ships regularly carried armed men or traveled in convoys with armed protection, while elite merchants also became courtiers and frequently fought with, or led, fighting forces—so it is entirely possible that some ship owners and merchants were also “fighting men.”⁹¹

We have much more precise information about the place of horse suppliers within the Pandyas’ “web of military associations.” According to Vassaf, one family of merchant-princes, the Tibi family of Kish, controlled both the export of horses from Il Khanid tributaries in the Gulf and their importation to the Pandya kingdom after 1292. In Iran, the Tibis paid tribute to the Il Khanids and bought the right to tax farm the province of Fars and its coastal areas more or less autonomously; later in that decade, the area under their control was extended to the head of the

90 Talbot, *Precolonial India*, 144.

91 On piracy and naval warfare along India’s western seaboard in the premodern period, see Margariti, “Mercantile Networks”; also Prange, “Trade of No Dishonor.” An example of a Hoysala merchant courtier with military experience, though not a trade in horses, is discussed in Ali, “Between Market and Court.”

Gulf and the port of Basra.⁹² Like many Iranian merchants under Il Khanid, rule the Tibis belonged to Mongol mercantile associations known as *urtaqs* which traded preferentially with and on behalf of the Mongol elite. What appears to have been unique about the Tibis—and perhaps explains Vassaf's inclusion of their family history within his "wonders of India" discourse—is the fact that they controlled both ends of the network and derived enormous wealth from it. In India, members of the family occupied key administrative roles within the Pandya polity. Vassaf records that Jamal al-Din's brother, Taqi al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Tibi, was deputy (*nā'ib*), minister (*vazīr*), adviser (*mushīr*), and administrator (*sāhib tadbīr*) to the Devar Sundar Bandi, likely the Pandya subregent Jatavarman Sundara Pandya III (r. 1276–92/93). In addition to this, the three principal ports of Fatan, Mali Fatan, and Qa'il "were made over to his [Taqi al-Din's] possession,"⁹³ and Vassaf reports that in 1292 the agents and factors of the Tibi brothers had the first choice of any merchandise arriving at Pandya ports.⁹⁴ Vassaf's attribution of the ancient Sasanian title *Marzubān al-hind* or "Warden of the Marches of India" to Taqi al-Din reinforces the extent to which Il Khanid Iran regarded the Pandyan ports as an extension of its maritime frontier. If horses from other horse-breeding areas such as the Yemen were allowed to enter the Pandya market, it was patently only with Taqi al-Din's permission. A list of gifts to influential figures at Indian ports compiled at the port of Aden includes Taqi al-Din's name, and Eric Vallet has noted that such gifting was probably intended to smooth Rasulid access to the Pandya market.⁹⁵ The Tibis' influence was sufficiently embedded in India to survive and even flourish after the death of Jatavarman Sundar Pandya in 692 AH/1292–93 CE, and, according to Vassaf, Malik Taqi al-Din "continued as prime minister, and, in fact, ruler of that kingdom, and his glory and magnificence were raised a thousand times higher."⁹⁶

The appointment of Middle Eastern merchants to administrative positions in Indian ports was already a well-established practice in South Asia, but possession of equine knowledge may have become an increasingly important prerequisite for appointment. Horse merchants certainly feature prominently in the later political history of the Bahmani and Adil Shahi Sultanates in the fifteenth century, and in

⁹² Vassaf, *Tazjiyatu-l amsar*, 33; on this particular system, see Aigle, *Le Fārs sous la domination mongole*, 92–95.

⁹³ Vassaf, *Tazjiyatu-l amsar*, 32–33.

⁹⁴ Vassaf, *Tazjiyatu-l amsar*, 35; also Aubin, "Les Princes d'Ormuz," 90.

⁹⁵ Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande*, 567.

⁹⁶ Vassaf, *Tazjiyatu-l amsar*, 35.

Mughal India in the seventeenth century; the example of the Tibis suggests that this may have been a much older practice and one that may have been particularly important in Peninsular India, away from terrestrial supply routes of *barri* horses.⁹⁷ The Tibis continued as key powerbrokers in South India right up until the conquest of the Pandya kingdom by the Delhi Sultanate in 1311.⁹⁸ The considerable political and economic influence allowed to the Tibi family is evidence for the Pandya polity's ability to plan militarily on an international scale. This was not the exploitative relationship that Polo and even to some degree Vassaf suggest, but a symbiotic alliance that integrated Il Khanid merchants into the heart of the Pandya polity's "web of military associations," to the benefit of both parties. Horses were physical manifestations of the Pandyas' international "web of military associations." After centuries of importing horses, South Asian military and political elites would have been well aware of regional variations, and, in the Pandya kingdom, horses of different origins may have been recognized and understood within this framework of meaning as physical evidence of the king's ability to command resources internationally.

It remains to be seen how far this Pandya network of horse supply differed from that of their Chola predecessors and indeed from those of their Hoysala and Kakatiya contemporaries. The absence of horses from Pandya inscriptions contrasts with frequent references in earlier Chola donative inscriptions to horse merchants from Malaimandalam, present-day Kerala, and with references in contemporary Hoysala inscriptions to horses as traded items.⁹⁹ While further analysis is needed, this pattern appears to suggest that the Tibis did indeed participate in a monopoly that largely bypassed earlier west-coast intermediaries.

97 Horse merchants may also have been encouraged to settle around ports. A Gurjarara Pratihara inscription, dated 736 CE, records the grant of a village in that district to a Brahmin from the sub-caste of the horse-trading Hetavukas; see Gupta, "Horse Trade in North India," 197.

98 A full family history of the Tibis remains to be written, although a substantial effort, based on Persian sources, can be found in Aubin, "Les Princes d'Ormuz," and in Aigle, *Le Fārs sous la domination mongole*.

99 In the Hoysala domains from 1167 CE onwards, horses are mentioned among lists of taxable commodities, although there is no mention of either their prices, their numbers, or their place of origin; see inscriptions listed in *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 9, inscription no. BI 170; also inscription of 1209 CE *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 7, inscription no. Hn.35 (cited in Appadurai, *Economic Conditions*, 119) and another dated 1261 CE listed in *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 9, inscription no. BI 409 (*Ibid.*, 129–30).

Horses and the “Martial Ethos” in Medieval South India

Another route into the South Indian reception and translation of *bahrī* horses is suggested by Cynthia Talbot’s work on the “martial ethos” of the Kakatiya dynasty’s court and army. In keeping with the importance of military action to the legitimacy of kingship and a wider military society, Talbot is able to demonstrate that military action is also a major, if neglected, subject in the epigraphic repertoire. As she observes, “fierce fighting between mounted horsemen is the main theme, for elite warriors were inevitably found in the cavalry contingents.”¹⁰⁰ Her analysis of the Kakatiya “martial ethos” as it emerges from the epigraphic record currently offers our best insight into how horses were received into medieval South India, and does so in ways that suggest fascinating opportunities for the comparative study of this South Asian martial ethos and contemporary European chivalric cultures. The inscriptions Talbot analyzes are extremely varied in imagery and content, and here I discuss three examples, each one illustrating a different scale at which we might locate the translation of horses into Indic military culture.

In large numbers, at the scale of a panoramic battle scene, cavalry adds to the terrifying sound and sight (drums and banners) of the advancing army, as the clouds of dust raised by the galloping horsemen obliterate the sun in an apocalyptic fashion. It is worth quoting at length a passage from an inscription of the Kakatiya ruler Ganapati (r. 1199–1260):

When the thundering of the war-drums of his victorious army on the march pervaded the far corners, it was as if the echoes reverberating off the towering houses of his enemies were telling them, “Escape to the forest quickly, for King Ganapati, a master in the battlefield, is approaching!” Held up high on tall poles and waving vigorously in the wind, his army’s battle colors seemed to signal to the many rival kings from a distance with the threat, “Run far away at once!” When the rays of the sun’s light had been totally extinguished by the clouds of dust that rose up from the ground as the rows of sharp hooves of his throngs of horses tore it asunder, the astonished people thought the sun had gone away, observing the frightful heads of the hostile kings rise up [in the air] as they were cut off by his weapons and mistaking them for an army of Rahus.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Talbot, *Precolonial India*, 145.

¹⁰¹ Talbot, *Precolonial India*, 145–46; an English translation of the original inscription from Ganapuram village (Nalgonda district) is reported and published in *Corpus of Inscriptions*, no. 22, vv. 3–5. Similar imagery appears in earlier Pala inscriptions from Bengal; see Chakravarti, “Early Medieval Bengal,” 198.

In the closer focus of battle engagement, it is the speed of the horse that is foregrounded and explicitly contrasted to that of elephants. An inscription celebrating a chief from the Telangana area of eastern India (r. 1262–89) describes an engagement featuring:

warriors [as savage as] lions and tigers, whose horses became [as swift as] thoughts and winds, and whose elephant-troops became [as towering as] mountains and clouds when Rudradeva's army exhibited its fear-someness in the extermination, dispersal, or capturing of [enemy] kings without effort.¹⁰²

Finally, at the most intimate scale, the generic horse becomes an individual horse, belonging to a named soldier and with its own name. A donative inscription dated 1235 records how “the king’s cavalier Vishaveli Masake Sahini,” in effect the Master of the Royal Stables¹⁰³ “gave 25 cows for a perpetual lamp to the glorious lord Tripurantaka, having been victorious in the battle of Chintalapundi mounted on [the horse] Punyamurti.”¹⁰⁴ One does not name an animal one does not value: Punyamurti means “Embodiment of Merits” and clearly was.

If the first example seems to resonate with outsiders’ views of horses as significant only in, or because of, their large numbers, the second points to at least one of the qualities for which horses were prized above elephants—namely, their speed—while the third reminds us of the close bonds that developed between elite riders and their mounts. Horses may have lived brief lives, but they were no less important to their riders; and the close association between cavalryman and mount evoked in the third inscription is often illustrated on memorial stones. Talbot does not indicate whether Vishaveli Masake’s inscription was also carved, but Figure 6 shows a roughly contemporary memorial stone from the same site, Tripurantakam in Kurnool District, depicting a single-mounted rider viewed in profile with smaller foot soldiers around him. Single-mounted horsemen are more usually represented on hero stones from Rajasthan, Sindh, and Kutch, areas with indigenous horse breeds and strong local equine cultures; and yet, alone in the Peninsular south, Kakatiya Andhra Pradesh developed its own distinctive tradi-

102 Talbot, *Precolonial India*, 147; English translation of the original inscription reported and published in *Corpus of Inscriptions*, no. 38, v. 4.

103 *Sahini* was the Telugu equivalent of Sanskrit *Sadhanika* (Master of the Royal Stables); see Talbot, *Precolonial India*, 68 (citing Sircar’s *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, 285). More generally, the term *rautu* designated a cavalry leader.

104 Talbot, *Precolonial India*, 69; English translation of an inscription at Tripurantakam (Markapur Taluk, Kurnool District) published in *South Indian Inscriptions*, inscription no. 283, v. 148.

tion of human and horse representation.¹⁰⁵ The uniqueness of the Kakatiya iconography raises many questions about the deep embeddedness of equine cultures in the region and the place of the horse in the Kakatiya martial ethos.

It remains to be seen whether Hoysala, Pandya, and other sources yield evidence for largely similar discourses and tropes, or whether the final picture will be of interrelated but nevertheless distinctive regional equine cultures, as distinctive perhaps as the visual representation of horses and riders discussed thus far. Only with a better documentation of visual and textual sources about horses across South India will we begin to capture the more subtle differences between these regional or perhaps dynastic equine cultures and, in so doing, follow the Indian lives of *bahrī* and other imported horses.

Conclusions

Indian Equine Knowledges in Circulation

By the thirteenth century, Peninsular India had developed distinctive regional equine cultures born from a millennium or more of horse keeping and horse importation. Though a great deal of research remains to be carried out in this area, it is clear that South Asian equine cultures were already strong enough to impact the Middle East, a circular movement of equine cultures too rarely noted in the dominant focus on their export from the Middle East to South Asia. Vassaf's less judgmental view of Indian horse-keeping skills resonates with evidence for well-developed equine knowledge in South Asia by the thirteenth century. In his account of India, the Damascene geographer Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari (d. 1348) reports that one of his informants, a Bahrayni horse trader, said that the "people of India have got a knack to distinguish the horses of good breed. As [*sic*] they find the mark in a horse known to them, they may purchase it at any price."¹⁰⁶ Indian veterinary skills were another facet of this equine knowledge recognized outside South Asia: an Arabic language veterinary treatise written around 1331 by the Rasulid ruler of the Yemen, al-Malik al-Mujahid (r. 1321–62), remarks on the expertise of Indian doctors in identifying early symptoms of a "horse plague" that affected animals across the Arabian Peninsula and at Indian ports in 728/1327.¹⁰⁷ These examples point to a far greater interaction between Middle Eastern and South Asian traditions of equine knowledge than either Vassaf's or Polo's accounts

¹⁰⁵ See Reddy, *Heroes, Cults and Memorials*, 119–24.

¹⁰⁶ English translation of Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari in *Masalik al-absar*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Discussed in Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals*, 155.

suggest, stimulated very directly by the horse trade across the western Indian Ocean and the further interactions this necessitated between specialists from both regions.

The inclusion of this anecdote in al-Malik al-Mujahid's treatise reminds us of the openness of the Arabic hippiatric tradition to other equine knowledges. Although South Asia was to become the major zone of encounter between Middle Eastern and South Asian hippiatric traditions from the later fourteenth century onwards,¹⁰⁸ horses also mediated this cultural encounter beyond South Asia, across the rest of the Islamic world.

Several of the major Arabic hippiatric texts of the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, composed from Spain to the Yemen, include chapters on the interpretation of the colors and markings of horses and attribute this knowledge directly to Indian authorities.¹⁰⁹ As Housni Shehada observes, "the idea that markings or patches on the horse's body indicate the good or bad luck that it may bring to its master is characteristic of the Indian tradition."¹¹⁰ It is exactly this importance of markings (marks) that al-'Umari highlights in his account of India.¹¹¹ Yet attempts to map a textual chain of translation and transmission from South Asia to Spain via Abbasid Baghdad have largely failed, as these sources acknowledge only generic "Indian sages" or Indian viziers who cannot be traced historically. This vagueness contrasts with the care usually paid to chains of textual and/or oral transmission in Islamic scholarship and highlights the extent to which the hippiatric textual tradition emerged relatively late in the Middle East, and often from direct personal experience in the craft of horse care.

The most likely vector for the transmission of this Indian knowledge to the Middle East, therefore, seems to have been not textual at all but oral, transmitted perhaps through the direct interactions of horse merchants, grooms, and buyers

108 With the Ghurid conquest of northern India in the late twelfth century, Indian equine treatises were quickly incorporated into Turkic and Persianate equine epistemologies. Śalihotra's *Complete Ayurvedic System* was first translated into Persian in the fourteenth century, and Persian translations of Sanskrit equine treatises were subsequently highly sought after and influential.

109 These include Ibn Awwam al-Ishbili's twelfth century *Kitab al-filaha*, composed in Spain; the *Kitab al-baytarah* of the Mamluk vizier Sahib Taj al-Din (d. 1307 CE), which includes a "chapter on what the Indians said about the colors of beasts of burden, the round patches and the marks"; the *Kashif* of Abu Bakr al-Baytar, chief veterinarian to Sultan Qalawun of Egypt (r. 1285–1340); and the ca. 1331 treatise by the Rasulid ruler al-Malik al-Mujahid. See Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals*, 92–94 and 152.

110 Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals*, 94.

111 Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari, *Masalik al-absar*, 40.

at horse fairs in the Gulf and Arabian ports, or indeed in India itself. An understanding of South Asian equine cultures was essential for any merchant or court that maintained relations with South Asia, as Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari's Bahrayni horse-trader informant indicated, because in India horses were judged first on their color and the auspiciousness of their markings. These Arabic chapters on the Indian science of horse physiognomy, along with al-Malik al-Mujahid's account of the horse plague, can thus be read as evidence for the circulation between South Asia and the Middle East of a very practical equine knowledge. But we might also reflect that, when they were read in places far away from this trade—for example, in Islamic Spain—such chapters also perpetuated an older Middle Eastern discourse about the wonders of the non-Islamic world. Through the vehicle of horses, India emerges once more as a “topsy-turvy” world where Middle Eastern taxonomies and practices are upended.

An Agenda for “Matters Equine” in Medieval South Asia

As Wendy Doniger has underlined, the horse was never perceived as an Indian animal in indigenous folklore, and even the boom in the *bahrī* horse trade in the thirteenth century may have had little impact on domesticating the horse in the Peninsular south, at least beyond the courts of elites. Perhaps most telling is the manner in which command over horses became intrinsic to certain South Indian conceptions of the geo-political universe, and yet how little horses were ever identified as a South Indian animal. As Cynthia Talbot has demonstrated, from at least the early fifteenth century, in parts of South India, the idea developed that the subcontinent was in fact “divided into three realms, each ruled by a king laying claim to superiority in one contingent of an army.”¹¹² The pattern that emerges over the centuries is that “the Lord of Horses was a designation that could signify any Muslim king,” but apparently only a Muslim king.¹¹³ Non-Muslim kings, by contrast, were lords of elephants, the quintessential royal mount of Indian kings and Indian war animal, or they were lords of men. Horse representations never became commonplace in the south of the Tamil country, and, as the art historian Crispin Branfoot has shown, it is only in the sixteenth century (and largely in the Tamil north, on the border with Andhra Pradesh) that horses enter the sculptural repertoire.¹¹⁴ Even then, the horse was somehow always a little fantastical and certainly a little terrifying: large rearing brutes with diminutive riders and strain-

¹¹² Talbot, “Inscribing the Other,” 710.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 709.

¹¹⁴ Branfoot, “Expanding Form,” 206. Branfoot (203–06) offers the most comprehensive history of this column type.

ing grooms join older iconographies of rearing griffins and other mythical animals in a new type of temple support known as the “mounted cavalryman” composite column (see Figure 7). As many outsiders remarked of South India, there are no horses native to that place, and the horse never became an indigenous animal: and yet the complex history of its reception and translation to South India magnifies the rich geographical and cultural diversity of this area and the ways in which horses became vehicles for the expression of other ideas.

The thirteenth century was not only a turning point in the diffusion of Middle Eastern horses to South Asia and beyond: by 1329, in northern Italy, the Gonzagas were cross-breeding Arab horses with local breeds, marking a symmetrical European fascination with “eastern” horses that later exploded, as Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton have shown, during the European “Renaissance”.¹¹⁵ As Marco Polo’s account shows, horses were already a truly “global interest” in the late thirteenth century, and had been for some time. However, this case study has demonstrated that the ubiquity of the modern horse at a global level hides a complex history of diffusion, and one that is substantially unwritten for much of this period across much of the globe. Moreover, at least for medieval South India, this is still far from being a history that is possible to write: a huge volume of primary source material exists in old, untranslated editions; archaeological excavations have been slow to collect faunal remains, let alone analyze them; and much architectural and iconographic evidence is inconsistently documented and published.

This situation is unlikely to change very quickly: there are few non-European medievalists compared to those specializing in Europe, fewer still being trained, and as long as this disproportion remains there will be tantalizing histories that can only be half told. Perhaps the frustration of not knowing how to tell these stories may spur more medievalists to study non-European history, or perhaps European medievalists will begin to see the possibilities for comparative and connected histories that these wider, global perspectives open. The medieval globe was always profoundly interconnected through the circulation of people, animals, things, and ideas, but its history can only be traced when seen from multiple perspectives, through both textual and material sources, and through sources from many regions in many languages and media.

¹¹⁵ Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests*, 148.



Figure 7. Rearing Horse Depicted on Composite Columns at the Sesaraya *Mandapa* at Srirangam, Tiruchchirapalli in Tamil Nadu (Vijayanagara Period, Mid-Sixteenth Century CE). Photograph reproduced courtesy of the American Institute of Indian Studies, Accession No 101330.

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Elizabeth Lambourn (ELambourn@dmu.ac.uk) trained in art history and now works at the interface of history and material culture. She specializes in the study of premodern Indian Ocean communities and societies and has published widely in this area. During 2011–13, she held a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship for the project *West Asia in the Indian Ocean, 500–1500 CE* (from which this article derives). She is currently finishing her monograph *Abraham's Luggage: A Social Life of Things in the Indian Ocean World*.

Abstract This article explores ways that the concept of equine cultures, developed thus far principally in European and/or early modern and colonial contexts, might translate to premodern South Asia. As a first contribution to a history of equine matters in South Asia, it focuses on the maritime circulation of horses from the Middle East to Peninsular India in the thirteenth century, examining the different ways that this phenomenon is recorded in textual and material sources and exploring their potential for writing a new, more connected history of South Asia and the Indian Ocean world.

Keywords Horse trade, equine culture, South Asia, *bahr/bahrī*, India, Il Khanid Iran, Pandya Kingdom, Kakatiya dynasty, Hoysala dynasty, China, Marco Polo, Vassaf al-Hazrat, Rashid ad-Din, martial ethos.

THE PAINTER, THE WARRIOR, AND THE SULTAN: THE WORLD OF MARCO POLO IN THREE PORTRAITS

SHARON KINOSHITA

FEW MEDIEVAL WORKS have greater name recognition than the text commonly known as Marco Polo's *Travels*. Composed in a Genoese prison in 1298 as the product of a collaboration between the Venetian merchant and an Arthurian romance writer called Rustichello of Pisa, it is widely regarded as a key text in the history of travel writing; at the same time, because of its many inaccuracies and apparent inventions, it has also been dismissed as a work produced from the imagination, rather than actual observation. Counterintuitively for modern readers, it was originally composed in Franco-Italian—the language of choice for nonclerical Italian writers seeking a broad, international audience—and then quickly translated and retranslated into French, Latin, Tuscan, Venetian, and a spate of other European languages.¹ Typically for the Middle Ages, no two versions were the same, and early manuscripts circulated under three different titles: *Le Devisement du monde* (*The Description of the World*), *Le Livre du grand Caam* (*The Book of the Great Khan*), or *Le Livre des merveilles* (*The Book of Marvels*). Arguably, the text was not categorized as travel literature until the mid-sixteenth century, when the Venetian humanist Giovanni Battista Ramusio published an Italian print translation (1559) in his series *Delle navigationi et viaggi*—a version augmented by many passages found in no other recension.² Today, however, the Marco-Rustichello text is received as an early exemplar of travel writing, reflected in the title of its modern English translations and reinforced by introductions authored by travel writers such as Jason Goodwin or Colin Thubron, in recent Modern Library (2001) and Everyman's Library (2008) editions, respectively.³

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of this essay for their generous suggestions and bibliographical recommendations, almost all of which I have tried to incorporate. Any remaining gaps or inaccuracies are of course my own.

1 On Franco-Italian, see Gaunt, *Marco Polo's "Le Devisement,"* 78–112. This opening is adapted from my essay, "Reorientations," 40–41.

2 Sanjay Subrahmanyam links the development of travel literature as a genre to the expansion of travel in the early modern period—by Asians as well as Europeans. See Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories," 737.

3 These editions are updated reissues of William Marsden's early nineteenth-century translation of Ramusio, as revised by Thomas Wright (1854) and Manuel Komroff (1926).

Yet understanding this text as “the travels” constitutes, I suggest, something of a category error. As a genre, the modern travel narrative brings with it expectations of eyewitness adventures whose “truth” is guaranteed by the author’s firsthand experience, presumed to be both heroic and unique.⁴ Classifying the text as a travel narrative, with Marco as the quintessential explorer-adventurer, thus exposes its author to accusations of fraud: *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* asks Frances Wood in a book whose title aggressively suggests that he did not.⁵ Though historians have largely rejected Wood’s argument, even to raise the question distorts our understanding of what the text signifies as a product of its historical time and place.⁶ To restore it to its original context, I reconsider the Marco-Rustichello text as *Le Devisement du monde*, the title it bears in the extant version acknowledged to be closest to the lost original.⁷ According to its prologue, it was originally composed in 1298, placing it almost exactly at the midpoint of the extraordinary century chronicled by Janet Abu-Lughod in *Before European Hegemony: The World System, A.D. 1250–1350*, in which the *pax mongolica* created by the conquests of Chinggis Khan and his successors momentarily produced a cosmopolitan world of trans-Asian travel, communication, and the circulation of people, goods, and ideas on an unprecedented scale.⁸

Le Devisement du monde is a textual witness to that world. Ranging from Anatolia in the west to Dadu (modern Beijing) in the east and the Indian Ocean in the south, it sets out explicitly to showcase “the diverse races of men and the diversities of diverse regions of the world” (“les diverses jeneracions des homes et les deversités des deverses region dou monde,” §1.1).⁹ Yet readings of the *Devisement*

Translations into other modern European languages, in contrast, frequently bear one (or more) of the text’s medieval titles.

⁴ For an overview, see Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*.

⁵ In rebuttal, Igor de Rachewiltz, an historian of the Mongols, calls Wood’s book “deceptive,” its execution “unprofessional,” and concludes that “her major arguments cannot withstand close scrutiny”; De Rachewiltz, “Marco Polo,” 89–90.

⁶ For more on the modern reception of Marco Polo, see Kinoshita, “Traveling Texts.”

⁷ It is also the title given in some subsequent Old French translations. On the preeminence of the Franco-Italian recension (the “F” text preserved in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 1116), see Gaunt, *Marco Polo’s “Le Devisement,”* 28–29.

⁸ This precapitalist “world system” was produced by the linkage of eight overlapping subsystems. Seven of these had very long histories (the European subsystem consisting of the cities of the Champagne trade fairs, Flanders, and the maritime republics of Genoa and Venice being a newcomer) but had rarely been so active at the same time. See Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 34.

⁹ All quotations are from the edition of Gabriella Ronchi, based on the principal manuscript

ment that do not merely pigeonhole Marco Polo as an explorer-adventurer tend to consider him together with, on the one hand, mendicant friars like John of Plano Carpini or William of Rubruck, who both undertook missions to the Mongol court in the 1240s and 1250s; or with John Mandeville (1356), whose “travels” have been revealed to be a savvy synthesis of textual sources, including the Franciscan Odoric of Pordenone’s *Relatio* (composed in the 1330s about his journey to India and China in the previous decade).¹⁰ Neither comparison does the *Devisement* justice. The friars’ accounts, however keenly observed, remain essentially intelligence reports on a recently discovered Other, rendered up to the pope and to the king of France, respectively.¹¹ Marco, in contrast, spent over two decades in Mongol service, honing his skills as an observer and narrator of “the news, customs, and practices” (“les noveles et les costumes et les usages,” §16.4) of the far-flung reaches of the Mongol empire, remembered and reproduced for Khubilai Khan’s entertainment. And unlike John Mandeville’s text, his description of “the diversities of the world” is drawn not from texts but from a judicious combination of eyewitness testimony and reliable hearsay.

The present essay, meant as an exercise in connected history, displaces attention from Marco Polo the *man* to the richness and complexity of the *world* that he and Rustichello describe.¹² To do this, it approaches that world through the portraits of three remarkable figures (two of them Marco’s exact contemporaries) from different parts of Asia whose lives intersected with and were conditioned by Abu-Lughod’s remarkable century: the Southern Song *literatus* Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), a noted artist and calligrapher who changed the canons of Chinese painting; Takezaki Suenaga (ca. 1245–ca. 1324), a provincial warrior who helped repel the Mongols’ attempted maritime invasion of Japan and later commissioned a set of scrolls commemorating his role in the campaign; and al-Ashraf Umar, the polymath sultan of Yemen (r. 1295–96) who authored scientific treatises and compiled registers that document the prosperity of late thirteenth-century Aden.

(see n. 7), with my translations: Polo, *Milione*. On diversity as an organizing principle of the Marco-Rustichello text, see Gaunt, *Marco Polo’s “Le Devisement,”* 145–71.

10 See Mandeville, *Book*, ed. Higgins. Examples of the pairing of Marco Polo and Mandeville may be found in Akbari and Iannucci, *Marco Polo and the Encounter*.

11 On the subtlety of William of Rubruck’s account in particular, see Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another’s Word*, 57–87.

12 I borrow this concept from Subrahmanyam’s “Connected Histories,” which he elaborates in relation to the early modern period. Subrahmanyam contrasts connected history to comparative history, which assumes states or cultures to be discrete and separate units. On the paucity of information about Marco Polo dating from his lifetime (as opposed to the legends that developed after his death), see Jacoby, “Marco Polo.”

Through these vignettes of the Painter, the Warrior, and the Sultan, we glimpse something of the complexity and interconnectedness of the world described in the *Devisement*, including the adaptive strategies of individuals in the face of the Mongol sweep to power.

The Painter: Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322)

When Marco Polo, with his father and uncle, arrived at Khubilai Khan's summer court at Shangtu in ca. 1274, the Mongols were in the final stages of their campaign against the Southern Song.¹³ They completed the conquest in 1276, bringing under their rule the rich lands south of the River Huai, including the fabulously wealthy capital of Quinsai (Hangzhou), the largest city in the thirteenth-century world, and Zaitun (Quanzhou), the great seaport on the Strait of Taiwan that was China's maritime gateway to trade with the Indies and the Islamic world. But the same conquest that opened the way for Marco to explore the southern kingdom he called "Mangi" (from the northern Chinese name for the southern "barbarians") made the Southern Song elite into subalterns in their own native land—among them our first figure, the Chinese painter, calligrapher, and literatus Zhao Mengfu.

Born in 1254 into a family of scholar-officials, Zhao Mengfu was a direct descendent of the founding emperor of the Song dynasty, Taizu. Growing up, he received the kind of traditional literati training that would have prepared him for a position in the imperial bureaucracy—much like his father, Zhao Yuyin (1213–65), who served as superintendent of salt and tea reserves in Jiangxi and as prefect of both Pingjiangfu (Suzhou) and Hangzhou.¹⁴ With the fall of the Southern Song as a result of the 1276 conquest, however, his entire class of scholar-officials became *yimin* (leftover subjects) occupying the bottom tier of the four-part hierarchy newly imposed on their native land.¹⁵ Zhao withdrew to his birthplace, Wux-

13 Khubilai's uncle Ögödei had conquered northern China—Marco's "Cathay"—in 1234. It had been ruled for just over a century by the Jurchen (dynastic name: Jin), a Manchurian forest people who had pushed the native Chinese Song dynasty south of the Huai River in 1125. Shangtu—Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Xanadu"—in Inner Mongolia, is described by Polo in *Milione*, §75.

14 McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 15, 21–22, 27.

15 The "permanent legal definitions" established under Khubilai were: (1) Mongols; (2) Semu, or "people of various categories" from western and central Asia, including Turkic peoples (especially Uighurs), Persians, and Arabs; (3) the population of the former Jin territories of northern China (including Khitans, Jurchens, and Koreans); and (4) Nanren, or "southerners" (the Chinese inhabitants of the recently conquered Southern Song empire). See Mote, *Imperial China*, 489–90. Needless to say, as the case of Zhao Mengfu attests, there were great variations of status and influence within and across groups.

ing (present-day Huzhou, about sixty miles north of Hangzhou, the former capital), on the southern shore of Lake Tai. There, in the picturesque landscape that inspired the cultivation of arts and letters, he devoted himself to study, painting, and calligraphy amidst a cohort of scholars retrospectively known as the “Eight Talents of Wuxing.” Traditionally, this period has been described as kind of self-imposed internal exile on the part of Southern Song loyalists who wanted nothing to do with the Mongol regime.¹⁶ But the lived reality of this turbulent transitional period was much more complex. As “numerous Yuan bureaucrats of diverse races and cultures arrived in posts all over former Southern Song territory” (including Wuxing), they may have been, in Shane McCausland’s words, “stereotyped by disgruntled locals as pretentious arrivistes” (as reported in a gossipy late Yuan source). Yet at the same time, contrary to expectation:

even Song loyalists—the more dyed-in-the-wool Confucians and older men generally—welcomed opportunities to become acquainted with the newcomers [and] northern Chinese, central Asians, and even Mongols became integrated into southern literati circles, which also included the so-called poet-monks (*shiseng*) [...] and clerics in the Buddhist and Daoist establishments.¹⁷

This scenario of contact and acculturation goes a long way in contextualizing Zhao’s decision to accept a high-ranking post in the Yuan administration in 1286. Officials explicitly appointed to recruit southern literati into Mongol service countered whatever political and cultural reluctance they may have felt by appeal to historical legends of two Han-era generals faced with capture by the Central Asian Xiongnu “barbarians” then invading China: one, Su Wu, resisted and was reduced to sheep herding; but the other, Li Ling, surrendered to and took service with the foreigners.¹⁸ In any case, Zhao, after ten years of self-imposed retreat, finally agreed to join the Mongol administration, arriving in the new capital of Dadu (present-day Beijing) in 1287. The *Yuanshi* (History of the Yuan)¹⁹ describes him as an

16 McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 28–30. On Zhao Mengfu’s older contemporary Qian Xuan, see Hearn, “Painting and Calligraphy,” 186–90. Zhao’s wife Guan Daosheng from nearby Nanxun was herself a painter and a poet, the most important woman artist of the Yuan era. McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 39.

17 *Ibid.*, 30. Yuan is the dynastic name adopted by Khubilai Khan in 1270.

18 *Ibid.*, 30–31. McCausland (154) rejects the suggestion that Zhao’s celebrated ink drawing *Sheep and Goat* alludes to this legend.

19 The *Yuanshi* was the official chronicle (including an extensive biographical section consisting of entries on the lives of distinguished individual subjects) composed, in accordance with custom, at the outset of the following dynasty, the Ming.

“outstanding talent and a luminary character, a man who would not have been out of place among immortals,” a very handsome man of aristocratic bearing:

Emperor Shizu [Khubilai] was pleased as soon as he saw him and commanded him to sit in a position superior to that of the minister of the left, Ye Li. Some said that it was inappropriate for Mengfu, a son of the Song imperial family, to be in such close proximity to the emperor, but the emperor would not hear their complaint. Indeed, the emperor immediately sent him to the Chancellery, commanding Mengfu to draft an edict to be promulgated to the nation. When the emperor read it, he was delighted and said: “You have grasped what I had in mind to say.”²⁰

Zhao was appointed first secretary in the Ministry of War (the department responsible for the Mongols’ famed postal service). On the one hand, it is not surprising to find him in the highest echelons of the Yuan administration: as *wangsun*—a “prince descendent” of the Sung imperial house—he would have contributed considerable prestige and credibility to the Mongol regime. On the other, given what McCausland felicitously calls the Mongols’ “government technophilia,” the prominence he achieved must also reflect his capacities and talent, and he is soon found consulting on important policy issues, eventually earning the confidence of Arghun Sali, one of Khubilai Khan’s senior advisors. Over the next several years, Zhao shuttled frequently between the capital and the south, conducting government business but also painting, writing poetry, and making connections with other artists and scholars.²¹

This account of the Great Khan’s taking a personal interest in a talented young newcomer, singling him out for a distinguished career, bears more than a passing resemblance to the tale of Marco Polo’s own arrival at Khubilai’s court.²² In the prologue to the *Devisement du monde*, Rustichello recounts that the Great Khan, seeing that Marco was “wise and prudent beyond measure [...] was very well disposed toward him,” immediately sending him on a mission to a distant land. On his return, Marco—having noted that the Great Khan “would rather hear about the news and the customs and practices of the foreign country” than about the affairs on which his envoys had been dispatched—regaled him with tales of “all the novel-

²⁰ *Yuanshi*, cited and translated in McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 14, 340–41.

²¹ McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 38, 51–54.

²² Since Zhao arrived at court in 1287 and the Polos are presumed to have begun their long journey back to Venice in 1291, the two would have overlapped in the Great Khan’s service for four brief years. On the extraordinary career of another Mongol official—Bolad, a Chinese-speaking Mongol of humble birth who rose to the highest level of the imperial administration—see Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 63–71.

ties and strange things” he had seen, “so well and intelligently that the Great Khan and everyone who heard him marveled, saying to each other: if this young man lives, he will surely become a man of great wisdom and valor” (§§16–17).²³ Marco, of course, would have occupied a much humbler place in the Yuan bureaucracy than Zhao Mengfu—holding, perhaps, “some minor nominal posts,” whereas Zhao, as scion of the former imperial house, would have conferred prestige on the Yuan regime by his service.²⁴ Nevertheless, Zhao’s varied activities and movements during his years under Khubilai reveal the administrative networks plied by the kind of Mongol officials in whose retinues the Polos might plausibly have traveled.²⁵

Zhao Mengfu exemplifies the transculturation that had begun to develop within a decade of the conquest of the Southern Song, countering the prevailing impression of the Mongols’ complete marginalization of the former imperial elite.²⁶ More evidence for the forms such transculturation could take comes from an unexpected source: the *Record of Clouds and Mist Passing Before One’s Eyes* (1296), an inventory of the art held by forty-seven different collectors in Hangzhou in the 1280s and 1290s. It was compiled by Zhou Mi, scion of one of the Southern Song *yimin* families displaced by Mongols, whose own art collection had been destroyed in the conquest. Though Zhou was a generation older than Zhao Mengfu (being a friend and contemporary of the latter’s father, Zhao Yuyin), their reactions to the fall of the Southern Song were both parallel and complementary. After his family estate in the picturesque Lake Tai district of Wucheng was looted in the conquest, Zhou (inverting Zhao’s trajectory) moved to Hangzhou, where he composed nostalgic memoirs of life under the fallen regime. By the mid-1280s, however, he began to show interest in reports from northern China, Central Asia, and the Yuan court as his circle of acquaintances widened to include the high officials, including

23 “miais ameroit oir les noveles et les costumes et les usajes de celle estranjes contree [...] toutes le nuvités et toutes les stranges chauses [...] si bien et sajement que le grant kan, et celç tuit que l’oient, en unt grant mervoie, et distrent entr’aus: se cest jeune vif por aajes il ne puet falir qu’il ne soit home de grant senç et de grant valor.”

24 As Europeans, the Polos would have figured among the *Semu*, the “varied peoples” who constituted the second of the four rankings under the Yuan. Mote, *Imperial China*, 490.

25 These activities have been reconstructed from a biography by Zhao’s protégé Yang Zai, written in the year of his death, and his biographical entry in the *Yuanshi*. McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 14, 347.

26 Timothy Brook, for example, writes that the Yuan dynasty “constructed its administration across the divide between north and south, effectively perpetuating the distinction by relying on northerners whenever possible and distrusting southerners who had resisted Mongol rule.” Brook, *Troubled Empire*, 35–36.

some Central Asians, now in charge of administering the south.²⁷ Compiled in the same years that Zhao Mengfu was making a career at the Mongol court, the *Record of Clouds and Mist* offers “a composite portrait of the rich and famous of early Yuan Hangzhou.”²⁸ Strikingly, some of the connoisseurs whose collections Zhou Mi catalogued were Central Asian high Yuan officials—the same people who had made life so uncomfortable for cultured scholars like the “Eight Talents of Wuxing.” In the wake of the 1276 conquest, members of the new bureaucratic elite seeking to accrue cultural capital had snapped up pieces from the collections of former imperial and aristocratic families that now flooded the art market—guided in their purchases by connoisseurs such as Zhou Mi:

in the day-to-day activities of the elite classes, art collecting provided a social lubricant, a point of contact for men of widely differing backgrounds. Yuan officials and Song loyalists met to show and view their collected items; they argued over points of connoisseurial interest and negotiated the sale and trade of artworks.²⁹

Remarkably soon after the conquest, art collecting had become a shared activity that “allowed for casual social and intellectual intercourse between northern and southern Chinese, and [...] therefore played an important role in the growing accommodation of southerners to Yuan rule in the 1280s and 1290s.”³⁰ As for Zhou Mi himself, his composition constitutes a de facto “record of his acceptance of the new realities of his world and his accommodation with the new structure of power in his community.”³¹

Zhao Mengfu was one of the connoisseurs whose collection is catalogued in *Record of Clouds and Mist*. In 1295, following Khubilai’s death (and the same year the Polos arrived back in Venice), Zhao retired to his family estate in Wuxing—ostensibly for reasons of ill health, but probably spurred by his wariness at the accession of Khubilai’s grandson Temür. Now resettled in the south, he exchanged

27 Weitz, introduction to Zhou Mi’s *Record of Clouds and Mist*, 11–13.

28 Ibid., 3–4. The title *Record of Clouds and Mist* comes from a line written by a late eleventh-century connoisseur to describe the ephemeral and precarious nature of art collecting.

29 Ibid., 4. Among the non-Chinese collectors were Lian Xigong, a highly sinicized Uighur whose brother was of one of Khubilai’s close advisors; Gao Kegong, a scribe who rose to high office in Hangzhou and Dadu and was himself a painter; and Cui Yu, “one of the most powerful men in the Yuan government in the late 1280s and 1290s,” who helped recruit southern scholars into Mongol service. Ibid., 141, 151, 174.

30 Ibid., 13, 20.

31 Ibid., 15.

poems with Zhou Mi and showed him his collection of calligraphy and painting.³² The *Record of Clouds and Mist* lists twenty-seven paintings and over a dozen pieces of decorative art (jade figurines and jewelry, bronze vessels, stones and inkstones of various kinds) from among the items in Zhao Mengfu's Crystal Palace Pavilion, "so numerous that they cannot all be recorded here."³³ Zhao may have inherited some pieces from his father, Zhao Yuyin;³⁴ others he likely acquired in Hangzhou, either during one of his frequent visits to the former southern capital or upon his return; still others he brought back from the north, affording the Southern Song elite their first access to such fine works since their ancestors had lost northern China to the Jin dynasty almost two centuries earlier. The paintings in Zhao's collection include works inscribed by the Tang emperor Gaozong and the Northern Song emperor Huizong, whose own extensive collection was the subject of a massive catalogue.³⁵

This brings us to Zhao's own work. In 1296, shortly after retiring to Wuxing, he produced two extraordinary figure paintings: *Horse and Groom* (today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art) and *Man Riding* (in the Palace Museum in Beijing), both ink-and-color handscrolls on paper. This move to small-format handscrolls (in contrast to the large-scale murals or hanging silk scrolls of the late Southern Song) typified trends in painting under the early Yuan: intended for private viewing and done on paper rather than silk, handscrolls could easily be exchanged. Different scholar-officials (which might include the artist or viewers) would create calligraphic poems and colophons that spurred ongoing conversations around the visual text, adding layers of commentary that belied the images' apparent simplicity.³⁶ These changes in format and modes of circulation went hand-in-hand with shifts in theme, style, and social function. Far from perpetuating the canons of their Southern Song predecessors and compatriots, painters of the early Yuan

32 McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 355–56.

33 Zhou, *Record of Clouds and Mist*, entry no. 32, 176–82. The jewelry includes a pair of bracelets in white jade that "must be from the Jin dynasty imperial harem" (180). The stones and inkstones are identified by their geographical places of origin. See also McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 59–60.

34 Zhou, *Record of Clouds and Mist*, 176n162, 190–92.

35 On the cultural politics of Emperor Huizong's collection and the catalogue, see Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture*. The imperial collection was confiscated as war booty in the Mongol conquest of the Southern Song. McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 48–49.

36 On paper handscrolls, see Hearn, "Painting and Calligraphy," 182. Zhao's early painting, *Landscape of Wuxing* (McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 194, fig. 3.1), is done on silk. On the changing practice of colophon-writing as a forum for political commentary and cultural negotiation, see McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 50–58.

created a body of work that McCausland characterizes as “more deeply autobiographic and more deeply imbricated in a system of social-political alliances and animosities.”³⁷ For Zhao and his contemporaries—both those who took service with the Mongols and those who did not—animal and figure painting in particular became “a way of talking about humanity, values and [...] the role of the Chinese ethical-political tradition in a Mongol-run world.”³⁸

For early Yuan artists, horse imagery (which had virtually disappeared under the late Song) became a favored means of expression. Thematically, it evoked ancient historical-legendary equestrian connoisseurs Bole and Jiufang Gao, whose expertise had become a metaphor for assessing the talents (especially hidden ones) of literati and scholar-officials.³⁹ At the same time, depictions of fine horses could not help but appeal to the Mongol elite, barely a generation removed from life on the steppe, for whom the procurement, maintenance, and regulation of horses was an essential part of empire.⁴⁰ Zhao Mengfu, for his part, had long used horse imagery to reflect on the complexities of his relationship to the Yuan regime. The earliest surviving examples are verbal rather than visual. Already in the early 1280s, his “Song on a Painting of a Rouge Colt” celebrated a spirited steed with a big heart, sparkling eyes, and heroic bearing that “gives it his all, not restrained by the halter man puts on him,” in contrast to fat “pampered but work-shy” horses—a description that has been read as an appeal on the part of an ambitious and talented but undiscovered scholar-official.⁴¹ Zhao himself is portrayed on horseback by his Wuxing compatriot Qian Xuan in *Young Nobleman Holding a Bow* (1290),

37 Ibid., 116.

38 Ibid., 115. Zhao was equally a noted calligrapher who, after the Mongol conquest, continually experimented with styles from earlier dynasties (Tang, Jin), likewise in an ongoing negotiation with and commentary on the predicament of life under Mongol rule: Ibid., 112–11.

39 Ibid., 126–28.

40 Ibid., 124. On the Mongol regulation of horses (including their requisitioning and the re-establishment of a Court of the Imperial Stud), see Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 129. Another artist well known for his depiction of horses (and whose life dates, 1255–1328, likewise correspond with Marco Polo’s) is Ren Renfa, who entered Mongol service as a specialist in watercourse management: see McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 38; and Hearn, “Painting and Calligraphy,” 202–06. On the development of a coeval equine culture in South India, see Elizabeth Lambourn’s article in this issue.

41 McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 126–27. Not all depictions were positive: Gong Kai’s famous ink-on-paper handscroll of an emaciated horse (today in the Osaka Municipal Museum of Fine Arts) expressed a Song loyalist’s staunch resistance to Mongol rule.

explicitly based on an eighth-century work by Han Gan, *Knight Errant of Wuling*, which Zhou Mi's *Record of Clouds and Mist* places in Zhao's own collection.⁴²

Composed during what would prove to be only a hiatus in Zhao Mengfu's service to the Mongols, his two 1296 horse paintings not only thematize the predicament of the literati but exemplify the innovations he brought about in painting during the Yuan. *Horse and Groom* depicts a bearded groom in black cap and long belted tunic holding a white stallion.⁴³ His "light grip on the halter rope and his bearing and body language [...] indicate that he is a formidable horseman, able to control a hugely powerful animal with the lightest of touches, but also that the horse is a fine animal worthy of his attention." In its subject matter, it looks back to the work of the late eleventh-century Song master Li Gonglin—in particular, his portrait *Five Horses and Grooms* (1098–90) from the imperial stables.⁴⁴ However, the fact that the groom "gazes intently" out of the frame explicitly interpolates the viewer into the scene as the Bole or Jiufang Gao figure asked to render expert judgment on the quality of the steed—a conventional metaphor, as we have seen, for recognizing the talents of gifted scholar-officials like the "blue-blooded" Zhao, who "believed he was born and bred for high office."⁴⁵ His style likewise alludes to the world of the literati: where the art of the late Song had tended to privilege technical virtuosity in the service of realism, the simplicity of line and color evokes the calligraphic tradition, of which Zhao was an acknowledged master. Thus, in the estimation of art historian McCausland, "Zhao's work reinvented figure painting as an art about the self, through a meaningful dialogue with a canon of old master sources, in order to shape dialogue about the contemporary role of the individual in the society and the state."⁴⁶

Zhao Mengfu's retirement to Wuxing turned out to be but a brief break in a long career in Yuan service. Even during this hiatus he maintained active relations

⁴² Ibid., 131–35; Zhou, *Record of Clouds and Mist*, §32.6

⁴³ See McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 122–24; and *Horses and Grooms* on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's website <<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/40507>> [accessed September 26, 2015]. Space limitations preclude a discussion of *Man Riding* (30 × 52 cm), which may portray Zhao's younger brother Mengyu and his decision to enter Mongol service: McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, 135–45 (esp. 140–41).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 116–18. In a poem-colophon, Zhao contrasted the liveliness of Li Gonglin's horses, "transmitted through calligraphy and painting," to the stone horses of a Tang imperial mausoleum, "[c]rumbl[ing] through the years of ages." At the same time, the poem's rhyme scheme, as Shane McCausland explains, makes dense intertextual reference to a celebrated poem of the eighth-century Tang poet Du Fu.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 122–24, 128–29.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 116.

with court administrators and participated in an imperial project to transcribe the entire Buddhist canon. By 1299, he finally yielded to rejoin the administration—this time in Hangzhou, as head of Confucian education for Jiangnan (the Lower Yangzi region, or southeast China). Then in 1310, summoned to Beijing by the new heir apparent (who became Emperor Renzong the following year), he began his second stint as a “metropolitan scholar official,” culminating in his appointment in 1316 as head of the Hanlin Academy;⁴⁷ duties included drafting imperial proclamations (a high honor reserved to the most qualified and distinguished literati), writing out texts for commemorative steles, and curating the imperial art collection.⁴⁸ Three years later, around the time of the death of his wife Guan Daosheng, Zhao once more withdrew from service and retired to Wuxing, this time permanently. His official biography recorded in the chronicle of the Yuan dynasty reports:

The emperor sent an envoy bearing gifts of clothing and cash to humour him into returning to court, but pleading ill health, Mengfu never returned [...]. In [1322], he received imperial favours to the extent of two suits of clothing. He died in the sixth month of the year, aged sixty-nine; he was subsequently enfeoffed as duke-of-state of Wei and posthumously honoured with the name Wenmin [cultural perspicacity].⁴⁹

In the historiography of medieval China, the period of Yuan (Mongol) rule, which followed that of the Liao (Khitans) and Jin (Jurchen) in the north, is sometimes cast as a kind of interregnum between the fall of the Song and the “restoration” of the native Ming dynasty in 1368.⁵⁰ It is tempting to equate a period of conquest and foreign domination with a decline in artistic and cultural traditions. Paradoxically, however, whatever hardships Mongol rule spelled for much of the population, it was also a productive time of intense creativity in the arts, including drama and calligraphy; painting, in particular, was transformed in ways that set the standards for subsequent eras. With the exception of deliberate imitation, painting after the Yuan rarely looked back to anything from before ca. 1300. Thus one art historian likens the painting of the Yuan era to that of the Renaissance in

47 Ibid., 75, 81, 83. The Hanlin Academy was imperial court’s center for Confucian scholars.

48 Hearn, “Painting and Calligraphy,” 198–99.

49 *Yuanshi*, trans. McCausland in *Zhao Mengfu*, 346.

50 Consider the title of the apposite volume in *The Cambridge History of China*: vol. 6, *Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368*. Recent historiography has begun to pay greater attention to continuities, rather than ruptures, between the Yuan and the Ming, as in Brook, *Troubled Empire*. See Smith, “Problematizing the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition.” The essays in the volume itself pose the question in relationship to topics such as population, urban development, family law, publishing culture, and medicine.

Europe for its significance in transforming later artistic traditions.⁵¹ At the center of this transformation was Marco Polo's contemporary, Zhao Mengfu, whose decisive influence over the artistic tradition resulted, as we have seen, not despite but in ongoing reaction to the Mongol conquest of China.

The Warrior: Takezaki Suenaga (ca. 1245–ca. 1324)

Our second figure is Takezaki Suenaga, a provincial Japanese *gokenin* (houseman or retainer) who fought on the front lines to repel the Mongols' two failed invasions of the island of Kyushu (1274 and 1281) during the first decade of Marco's service to the Great Khan.⁵² Today, Suenaga is remembered for two *emaki* (picture scrolls) he commissioned commemorating his role in the invasions and their aftermath. Executed in a blend of central and local styles attributed to four different artists and accompanied by calligraphed texts in five distinct hands, these scrolls are unique in having been produced not for a member of the central elite but for a provincial warrior on the literal periphery of power.⁵³ Compared with other surviving *emaki*, all produced in the sophisticated style of the capital of Kyoto, Suenaga's scrolls have been found "coarse in brushwork" and lacking in refinement; nevertheless, they show, as one art historian writes, "a vividness and authenticity absent from other similar scrolls, which record battles of the more distant past," resulting from the unique circumstances of their composition, with Takezaki Suenaga himself "relat[ing] his experience in fighting the Mongol invader directly to the artist, so that his own exploits could be recorded for posterity."⁵⁴ For our purposes, the scrolls afford an exceptional account of an invasion sketchily recorded in the *Devisement du monde* (which focuses primarily on the second of the two failed campaigns), filtered through the eyes of an eyewitness who, like Zhao Mengfu, was a close contemporary of Marco Polo.

51 Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River*, 3.

52 Born around 1245, Suenaga is last attested in 1324 at the age of seventy-nine. The scrolls have been the object of intense reconstructions, described by Conlan in the introduction to his translation, *In Little Need*, 11–15, and illustrated at <<http://www.bowdoin.edu/mongol-scrolls/>> (accessed April 1, 2014).

53 On the number of different artists and hands, see Conlan in the introduction to his translation, *In Little Need*, 2 and notes. The scrolls are tentatively dated ca. 1293 and 1314, respectively, though the first may have intentionally been backdated by Suenaga himself for political reasons. *Ibid.*, 5–7.

54 Okudaira, *Emaki*, 88.

The Kamakura era (1185–1333) marked the beginning of what modern historians call the “medieval” or “feudal” period of Japanese history.⁵⁵ Four turbulent decades of plots, counterplots, and proliferating factionalism had effectively led to the transfer of power from the imperial capital at Heian (Kyoto) to a regime (*bakufu*) of warrior elite centered in Kamakura (southwest of present-day Tokyo). This split resulted in a power-sharing arrangement that, paradoxically, brought a century of relative peace and stability: a complex but culturally rich period that one historian has termed “a world upside down.”⁵⁶ The *Mōko shūrai ekotoba* (scrolls of the Mongol invasion) belong to the genre of long horizontal scrolls (*emaki*) originally introduced to Japan, along with Buddhism, from Tang China in the mid-sixth century, that reached their height of popularity in the Kamakura era.⁵⁷ Although religious themes had previously predominated, in this period the social mobility and wide-reaching changes characterizing this “world turned upside down” produced a diversity of subject matter, reflecting the complexity of the age and bringing the form to new heights of popularity. Alongside representations of Heian romances and diaries that bespoke a nostalgia for aristocratic culture were landscapes, depictions of ordinary working people, and “real life” scenes that included a “Scroll of Diseases and Deformities,” “The Story of Minister Kibi’s Trip to China,” and “The Story of the Warrior Obusama Saburo.”⁵⁸ A product of this same milieu of political, social, and cultural transformation, Takezaki Suenaga’s scrolls of the Mongol invasions paint an astonishing portrait of this

55 On the emergence of structures resembling Western feudalism (itself a contested category), especially in eastern Japan, see Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, 36–43.

56 Beyond the two capitals, there was the political and cultural division between “a western Japan of sea, ships, and piracy [and] a more continental eastern Japan, a land of plains and horses, of warriors practicing the ‘way of the bow and the horse’”: Ibid., 13.

57 After the Tang, Chinese preferences shifted to vertical hanging scrolls, while in Japan, horizontal scrolls remained the norm, eventually expanding to accommodate a range of secular as well as religious subjects.

58 Okudaira, *Emaki*, 76–78, 80, 84. Like early Yuan rule in China, the Kamakura era in Japanese history was a period of cultural innovation amidst political and social upheaval. In the religious sphere, it saw the foundation of popularizing forms of Buddhism (such as Pure Land and Nichiren), as well as the Rinzai school of Zen (which enjoyed the support of the early Hojo shoguns). *The Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari*), an orally transmitted epic account of the defeat of the Heike (or Taira) by the Genji (or Minamoto), eventual founders of the Kamakura regime, was composed ca. 1210–20, “a true synthesis of the literary genres of the time.” On religion, see Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, 70–80; on the *Heike*, 80–81. On the distinctive art of the period, see Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 147–203. See also the essay by Elizabeth Oyler in this issue.

world-historical event filtered through the preoccupations of an embattled provincial warrior.

The first Mongol invasion of Japan took place in 1274, the year that the Polos likely arrived at Khubilai's court. According to Marco, Mongol interest in Japan was stimulated by the island's great wealth, its "gold beyond measure" and "pearls in abundance" (§159).⁵⁹ Both the expedition and the diplomatic correspondence that preceded it were triangulated through Koryô (Korea), which had itself recently become a Mongol vassal state after a long campaign of resistance. Already in 1268, Khubilai (following up on a letter sent two years before that had failed to reach its destination) had sent the Japanese an overture cum ultimatum:

From time immemorial, rulers of small states have sought to maintain friendly relations with one another. We, the Great Mongolian Empire, have received the Mandate of Heaven and have become the master of the universe. Therefore, innumerable states in far-off lands have longed to form ties with us. As soon as I ascended the throne, I ceased fighting with Koryo [Korea] and restored their land and people. In gratitude, both the ruler and the people of Koryo came to us to become our subjects; their joy resembles that of children with their father. Japan is located near Koryo and since its founding has on several occasions sent envoys to the Middle Kingdom. However, this has not happened since the beginning of my reign. This must be because you are not fully informed. Therefore, I hereby send you a special envoy to inform you of our desire. From now on, let us enter into friendly relations with each other. Nobody would wish to resort to arms.⁶⁰

This letter, in contrast to its predecessor, reached its destination but elicited no response from either Kyoto or Kamakura. Finally, in 1274 (after helping quell a revolt that had temporarily toppled their Korean client-king), the Mongols launched their attack. Crossing the Korean strait to the north coast of Kyushu, the fleet anchored in Hakata Bay. The defenders who met them were, in the main, *gokenin* like Suenaga—vassals who, in exchange for an office granting rights to land, were obligated to make war under the orders of the provincial military governor.⁶¹ After some initial skirmishes, the Japanese eventually retreated inland. For its part, the Mongol-Korean force withdrew and was hit by a storm at some

⁵⁹ "Ie or [...] outre mesure [...] perles en abondance."

⁶⁰ Cited and translated by Ishii, "Decline of the Kamakura Bakufu," 131–32.

⁶¹ In peacetime, *gokenin* were required to maintain a guard at their own cost, either in Kamakura (near the shogun) or in Kyoto (at the palace of the shogun's representative). Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, 54.

point in their retreat, such that by the time the fleet returned to Korea, a third of the expedition had been lost.⁶²

This is the campaign depicted in the first of Takezaki Suenaga's two scrolls, *Mōko shūrai ekotoba*. As they have been reconstructed, the scrolls are divided into twenty-one scenes: ten scenes depicting the first invasion of 1274 on the first scroll, and, on the second, eleven scenes depicting the invasion of 1281. Unfurling from right to left, they are interspersed with calligraphic passages giving Suenaga's own retrospective account. What survives of the first scroll begins in medias res: the Mongols have already landed, and the *gokenin* of Kyushu have been ordered out to meet them. As Suenaga tells the story, his fiery enthusiasm for fighting the invaders is inseparable from his quest for recognition to help him in political disputes which have left him landless. For Suenaga, this means being the first to confront the "foreign pirates" (§1). Thus, when the commander sends word to hold back so that they all may attack together, he protests: "Waiting for the general will cause us to be late to battle. Of all the warriors of the clan, I Suenaga will be first to fight from Higo [province]" (§1). Riding past the commander's encampment and disobeying an order to dismount, he explains: "We five horsemen are going to fight before you [...]. I have no purpose in my life but to advance and be known [...] I want [my deeds] to be known by his lordship" (§2).⁶³

This becomes Suenaga's leitmotif. Even as the scroll's images depict warriors riding across the terrain or peering at the enemy (depicted as fearsome) through clusters of trees, the text of the first scroll devotes much less space to the actual engagement with the invaders than to Suenaga's trek to Kamakura the following year to protest the fact that his name had not figured in the official report of the battle. Arriving in the capital after a long two-month journey, he makes the rounds of "any number of officials" but is ignored "because I appeared to be a minor warrior with only one low-ranking follower." After visiting a shrine to invoke the aid of the gods, he finally procures an interview with the governor (*shugo*) for Higo at the office of appeals. Suenaga presents his case at length, repeating nearly verbatim much of the material recounted in the earlier passage, including the plea he had made to the military commander:

62 Ishii, "Decline of the Kamakura Bakufu," 138–40. This is the famous *kamikaze* (divine wind), credited with twice saving Japan from Mongol invasion. The legend, however, must be treated with caution: "For the Mongols, the typhoons provided the perfect excuse to justify a devastating defeat, for it left their military reputation untarnished, while for the priestly or courtly chroniclers of Japan, these winds 'proved' the miraculous nature of their victory over an overpowering adversary." Conlan, commentary on Suenaga, *Mōko shūrai ekotoba*, 259.

63 Suenaga, *Mōko shūrai ekotoba*, 23, 40. "His lordship" is the commander's brother, the military governor (*shugo*) of Higo province (40n2).

Because my [land] dispute (*honso*) has not been settled, I have only five mounted warriors. Therefore, I have no choice but to fight visibly against the enemy. Other than advancing and having my deeds known, I have nothing else to live for. I want to lead the charge and have this reported to the lord. (§7)

The *shugo*, however, explains that since he took no enemy heads and none of his men was killed in battle, his deeds were “not sufficient” to merit inclusion in the report. Suenaga, in turn, asks that the commander who witnessed his exploits be consulted. When this request is rejected on the grounds that there is “no precedent” for such an appeal, he retorts:

If this concerned disputes over land rights or if it were a battle involving only Japan I know I could not make such an unprecedented request. *But this is a battle involving a foreign court. Precedent does not apply.* It seems that I cannot be questioned or have [my reports] viewed by the lord for lack of precedent! How then can I maintain my martial valor? (§7)⁶⁴

Told to go home to await the court’s decision, he protests that since his property dispute is still pending, “I am landless. I don’t know where to go to live.” The magistrate then concedes that Suenaga’s position is “most difficult indeed” and agrees to bring his case to the attention of the regent. As a result, Suenaga receives, “as a reward for your service,” a formal edict confirming his land holdings and—more significantly to him—a “fully equipped” horse:

I was speechless for having been so honored. Respectfully I received a chestnut horse with a saddle decorated with a small, comma-shaped heraldic device. Saeda Goro, master of the stables, provided the horse’s bridle and other well-made accoutrements.⁶⁵

In a separate passage, he elaborates: “well over one hundred men received praise but only I received an edict and a horse. What could [exceed] my honor [as a man of the way] of the bow [and arrow]?”⁶⁶ For Suenaga, the Japanese stand against the Mongol invasion matters less for its world historical importance than for the honor and recognition it finally brings him.

In the aftermath of the 1274 invasion, Kamakura extended and systematized its control over western Japan (previously in Kyoto’s orbit), appointing new gover-

⁶⁴ Ibid., 89, emphasis added. On the elaborate bureaucratic procedures in place for determining each warrior’s contribution to battle, see Conlan’s commentary in Ibid., 260.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 89–90, 106–07.

⁶⁶ Ibid., §14 and 185.

nors, making unaffiliated warriors (*higokenin*) into vassals (by “confirming” their rights to lands that were not the *bakufu*’s to confer), and establishing a special administration over Kyushu. Meanwhile, the Mongols were completing their conquest of the Southern Song (1276–79), which both freed up military resources and gave them new maritime bases in the south. In 1281 they launched a second invasion of Japan—a two-pronged attack (from Korea and from the ports of south China) much larger than in 1274. As before, the fleet began by ravaging the islands off the coast, especially Tsushima.

Then they landed on Kyushu. But this time, the Japanese warriors knew their enemy. Thanks to stone walls [constructed in the interim] and battle expertise, the samurai kept the formidable Mongol cavalry from deploying and pinned it to the coast. After a week of fierce combat, the Mongols managed to establish a small beachhead, but they later had to abandon it and withdraw to the already conquered small islands to regroup. Then a second storm arose, coming to the rescue of the defenders. The Mongol armada was dispersed, sunk, broken. Thirty thousand Mongol, Chinese, and Korean survivors, unable to leave the islands, fell to Japanese swords.⁶⁷

The *Devisement*’s account of this Mongol debacle accounts for the defeat by attributing responsibility for the “ill adventure” to the enmity between the two “barons” leading the expedition from the southern Chinese ports of Zaytun and Quinsai. For though they were “wise and brave,” there was “great envy” between them, “and one did not do a thing for the other” (§159). Interestingly, the narrative of the military engagement itself makes no explicit mention of either “baron.” When the Japanese landed on the island in pursuit of the invaders who had taken refuge there, the Mongols snuck around and boarded their empty ships. Sailing to another (unnamed) island:

they disembarked, and with the banners and pennants of the lord of the island, they went to the capital. Those who saw the pennants truly believed that these were their people; they let them into the city. And they, finding old men, took the city and chased all the people out, excepting only some beautiful women that they kept to serve them. And in the way that you have heard, the Great Khan’s men took the city. (§160)

In Marco’s account, the Mongols endured a seventh-month siege, but since they were unable to “alert the Great Khan to what was happening [...] there was noth-

⁶⁷ Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, 62. Some advice in countering this second invasion came from Southern Song elite who had fled to Japan at the Mongols’ conquest of southern China (*Ibid.*, 79).

ing they could do,” and eventually they capitulated to the Japanese, negotiating a pact so they “they all lived.” However, because the Great Khan “had found out that they conducted themselves badly in this affair,” he had one of the “barons who was the head of the army” beheaded and sent to other back to the island “where he had destroyed [lost?] many people” and had him executed there. The narrative then concludes with a “marvel” of the Mongols’ inability to behead eight prisoners-of-war because of an enchanted stone that protects its bearer from being killed by iron. Undeterred, the Mongols clubbed the prisoners to death with maces, then “took the stones [...] and held them very dear”—this “story of the discomfiture of the Great Khan’s people” thus being (partially) redeemed and deflected by the account of the miraculous stone and its acquisition.

Suenaga’s scroll, as might be expected, recounts this second failed Mongol campaign from quite a different perspective. Like the first, it opens in the midst of the action. The Mongols are retreating from Kyushu with the Japanese in pursuit—Suenaga among them. Passing a line of stone fortifications, he calls out to its commander: “Have my deeds reported to the lord. If you survive, tell all” (§9).⁶⁸ Suenaga, with no boat of his own, narrates his attempts to secure a place in one of the warboats depicted in the scroll’s imagery (the text at this point being riddled with lacunae).⁶⁹ Thrown off or denied access to one boat after another, he finally manages to talk his way onto one, leaving his retainers behind and crafting an impromptu helmet from a pair of shinguards. As in the first scroll, the account focuses less on the skirmish itself than on Suenaga’s determination to be in the middle of the fray and in collecting witnesses to attest to his efforts:

When I attacked the enemy and was wounded, [various members of] Hisanaga’s forces [...] stood as witnesses for me. After Raijo had been wounded, I threw away my bow and picked up a *naginata* [a kind of halberd]. I tried to hurry my rowers by yelling “Get close! I want to board!” But when I said this the boatmen stopped using their oars and started pushing the boat back with their poles in order to flee. I had no choice but to switch boats again. (§13)⁷⁰

Though Suenaga and his men are wounded, he has the satisfaction of noting that “this was reported to the *shugo* at Ikinomatsubara. We were the first from our

68 Suenaga, *Môko shûrai ekotoba*, 119.

69 In some of the images, captions identify individuals warriors seated in the craft. One caption, reflecting Suenaga’s sensitivity to due recognition, reads: “Raijo fought bravely in many battles, but because he was a retainer of the Echizen lord, [his deeds] were not recorded in documents of praise”: *Ibid.*, 138.

70 Suenaga, *Môko shûrai ekotoba*, 179.

province whose names were recorded in a report" (§13). Suenaga's preoccupations here closely mirror the warrior ethos expressed in near-contemporary tales like the *Heike monogatari* (*Tale of the Heike*). Fighting explicitly as "an individual seeking reward for his battlefield successes," he displays an aggressivity that takes the conventional form of competition to be "first in battle" (*sakigake, senjin*). Contemporary accounts represent warriors "'striving to be first' (*ware saki ni*; literally, 'Me first!'), 'contending for the lead' (*saki o arasou*), or determined to be 'second to none' (*ware otoraji*)," even when this means contravening orders: fame "depended on having one's exploits properly witnessed."⁷¹

As reconstructed over the centuries, the *Mōko shūrai ekotoba* conclude somewhat abruptly with two compelling passages, both referring back to Suenaga's expedition to Kamakura in 1275. The first acknowledges his debt of gratitude to Adachi Yasumori, the official who had rewarded him for his exploits against the Mongols the previous year (§14, cited above). The second recounts a dream he had had on his journey to Kamakura. This dream, about the deity of the Kosa shrine, presages (Suenaga believes) his eventual title to Kaito shrine—lands that originally belonged to Kosa and possession of which allowed him to expand his own lordship.⁷² Taken together, the two passages highlight both the political and the divine recognition of his role in repelling the first Mongol invasion of 1274. Seen through Suenaga's eyes, the much larger-scale campaign of 1281 appears to be something of an anticlimax: an opportunity to confirm the honors hard won in the aftermath of the first expedition, but not one that requires divine intervention.

The Sultan: al-Ashraf Umar (r. 1295–96)

Our third portrait begins with an artifact: an astrolabe now on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, made "by [the] hand and under [the] supervision" of 'Umar ibn Yusuf ibn 'Umar ibn 'Ali ibn Rasul al-Muzaffari.⁷³ Dated by inscription to 1291, it belongs to the time the Polos were beginning their long journey home from China and its creator, better known to history as al-Ashraf 'Umar, was the crown prince and soon-to-be Rasulid sultan of Yemen.⁷⁴ During the

⁷¹ Varley, *Warriors of Japan*, 94–95, 97. As referenced above (n. 58), the *Heike monogatari*, compiled in the early thirteenth century, follows the fortunes of Taira clan, whose defeat in 1185 marked the end of the Heian period: Varley, *Japanese Culture*, 80.

⁷² Suenaga, *Mōko shūrai ekotoba*, §§15 and 4.

⁷³ "Astrolabe of 'Umar ibn Yusuf ibn 'Umar ibn 'Ali ibn Rasul al-Muzaffari." Inscription translated by David A. King, <<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/444408>> [accessed September 26, 2015].

⁷⁴ Originally a Turcoman dynasty, the Rasulids had arrived in the Yemen as military lieu-

long reign of his father, al-Muzaffar (r. 1249–95), he developed into quite the royal polymath. Besides a treatise on the astrolabe, works ascribed to him include the *Kitab al Tabsirah fi 'ilm al-nujum* (Book of Instruction in the Science of Astronomy and Astrology), a compilation of received knowledge and new observations on topics as varied as the winds and rains, the growth of plants, animal husbandry, tax collection, the cultivation of fruits, the collection of aromatic plants, and the seasons for navigation (dated 1271, the year Marco first set out for the east); and a genealogical treatise claiming his dynasty's ancient Arab (rather than Turcoman) descent.⁷⁵ At his accession in 1295 (the year the Polos finally reached Venice), al-Ashraf 'Umar assembled registers of documents from his father's reign: *Nur al-ma'arif* (The Light of Knowledge) included inventories and price lists of artisanal and agricultural products, foodstuffs and textiles to be supplied to the palace, gift recipients, amounts paid soldiers and administrative officers for various tasks; and taxes levied on products in the great port of Aden.⁷⁶

Located in the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula where the Indian Ocean meets the Red Sea, Aden was the entrepôt connecting the maritime trade route from China and the Indies to Egypt and the Mediterranean.⁷⁷ Over the centuries, successive ruling dynasties had added to its natural advantages as a protected port free of underwater hazards by cultivating both its physical and institutional infrastructure in a manner consistent with other Indian Ocean ports.⁷⁸ The Rasulids, who had established their rule in Yemen earlier in the century, were particularly aggressive in this regard, expanding the infrastructure both of the port

tenants of the Ayyubid sultans of Egypt (1171–1250) but had wrested autonomy from Cairo in 1228. They ruled until 1454.

75 Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande*, 64, 86. The agricultural section of this book (chapter 32) has been translated by Daniel Varisco as *Medieval Agriculture and Islamic Science*. An autograph version of the treatise on the astrolabe, preserved in Cairo, contains certifications by the prince's teachers of his competence in this art, as well as a description of the very piece preserved at the Metropolitan Museum.

76 Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande*, 70–71.

77 Trade via the Red Sea corridor had increased in relation to the Persian Gulf with the Fatimid conquest of Egypt (969)—one symptom of the relative decline of Baghdad. Margariti, *Aden and the Indian Ocean Trade*, 27. In the twelfth century, Aden was an important hub in the "India Trade" of Jewish merchants based in Old Cairo (Fustat), whose correspondence and other household records survive in the Cairo Geniza—the treasure trove of documents "rediscovered" in the late nineteenth century and subsequently mined by historians (notably S. D. Goitein) for its evidence of life in the medieval Mediterranean. For its importance as an emporium over time, see Power, *Red Sea*, 175–78.

78 Margariti, *Aden and the Indian Ocean Trade*, 10. This included a special tax levied on Indian Ocean vessels to pay for armed galleys to patrol against pirates. Smith, "Port Practices," 212.

and of its connections to the hinterlands. Under al-Ashraf 'Umar's father, al-Malik al-Muzaffar (r. 1249–95), Aden had benefited from the disruption of trans-Asian land routes by the Mongol conquest and by Crusader-Mamluk struggles over its terminus at Acre.⁷⁹ The result was a substantial increase in trade: custom house accounts compiled at al-Muzaffar's death in 1295 list nearly three hundred commodities, compared to only thirty-three in a description of Ayyubid Yemen from earlier in the century.⁸⁰ Aden had risen to the rank of a major international emporium during the years of the Polos' sojourn in the East.⁸¹

Marco Polo likely never saw Aden: the Polos' return route from China to Venice took them via the Persian Gulf through the lands of the Ilkhans of Persia (descendants of Khubilai's brother Hülegü), the political rivals of the Mamluks, who controlled shipping on the Red Sea.⁸² He accurately describes it, however, as "the port where all the ships from India come"—the transshipment point through which "the Saracens of Alexandria" get all their pepper, spices, and other precious merchandise (§194).⁸³ The lack of eye-witness authenticity does not undermine his authority; rather, his account reflects his access to knowledge of Aden's pivotal role in the all-important Indian Ocean trade, known to most Venetians only through their trading connections in Alexandria.⁸⁴ In the previous section, on Abyssinia, the sultan of Aden figures as the villain in a tale of a Christian bishop taken captive while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and forcibly circumcized (i.e., converted to Islam) in order to "shame and spite" his lord the king, prompting a war between them. In the section on Aden proper, the fact that the sultan contributed his own troops to the Mamluk conquest of Acre is attributed to "the ill he wished on Christians" rather than "any love" for the sultan of Babylon [Cairo].⁸⁵ Typically for the *Devisement*,

79 Jazim and Marino, "Nur al-Din et al-Muzaffar," §28.

80 Smith, "Port Practices," 211–12.

81 The cosmopolitanism of Rasulid interests may be gauged from the so-called "Rasulid Hexaglot" compiled under al-Ashraf 'Umar's fourteenth-century successor al-Abbas ibn Ali ibn Daud (r. 1363–77)—the multilingual glossaries in Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Greek, Armenian, and Mongol. See Allsen, "The *Rasulid Hexaglot*."

82 These are the separate circuits described by Abu-Lughod in her chapters "Sindbad's Way: Baghdad and the Persian Gulf" and "Cairo's Monopoly under the Slave Sultanate," respectively: *Before European Hegemony*, 185–247.

83 "le port, la u toutes les nes de Indie hi vienent [...] les saracin d'Alexandre."

84 Latin Christians' access to the port of Alexandria, however, had been cut off by papal sanctions against trade with the Mamluks in the run-up to and aftermath of their conquest of Acre, the Crusaders' last mainland outpost, in 1291.

85 In fact, surviving registers show that the Rasulid administration used the title "sultans of Abyssinia" for the Christian rulers of Ethiopia and the Muslim princes of Ifat alike, not

however, most of the passage is devoted to commercial affairs: the text correctly identifies “handsome Arabian warhorses” as a major export to the Indian Ocean and reports that “the sultan of Aden gets a lot of income and great treasure from the great tolls he takes from the ships and the merchants who go and come in his land; [...] for this reason [...] he is one of the richest kings in the world.”⁸⁶

As for al-Ashraf ‘Umar’s astrolabe, if there is a signature object that emblemizes the transmission and expansion of medieval science across linguistic, cultural, and religious frontiers, that object is the astrolabe. Originating in Greek antiquity, the astrolabe was first introduced to the Muslim world in eighth-century Harran (upper Mesopotamia), and treatises detailing its use or construction were composed by some of the best-known names in Islamic mathematics and science, including al-Khwarizmi in the ninth century, al-Biruni in the tenth century, and al-Tusi in the thirteenth.⁸⁷ Al-Ashraf ‘Umar’s work on the astrolabe situates him within a recognizable model of medieval rule: the polymath prince with an interest in science and technology. While this interest most commonly took the form of patronage (particularly in the commissioning of scientific works or their translation), the future sultan’s hands-on involvement finds precedents in figures like al-Mu’tamin ibn Hud, the late eleventh-century king of Saragossa (in Muslim Spain), a noted mathematician whose *Kitab al-Istikmal* (Book of Perfection) was studied and copied across the Mediterranean into the fifteenth century and beyond, and the Hohenstaufen emperor Frederick II (r. 1220–50), who corresponded with philosophers (working in Arabic as well as Latin and Greek) and authored a noted treatise on falconry, *De arte venandi cum avibus*.⁸⁸ To the concerted military, diplo-

differentiating them by religion. Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande*, 417. On measures taken to restrict Mamluk trade in the Red Sea, see Jazim and Marino, “Nur al-Din et al-Muzaffar,” §30.

86 On the patronage network the sultan of Aden had forged with a network of Muslim communities on the western and southeastern coasts of India, see Lambourn, “India from Aden.”

87 The earliest extant Arabic treatise is by al-Khwarizmi. Al-Tusi (1202–74), who developed a linear (as opposed to planispheric) astrolabe, entered the service of Hülegü Khan (Khubilai’s brother) after Hülegü’s conquest of Baghdad (1258). He directed the construction of the Maragha Observatory, the “first research institution on a large scale with a recognizably modern administrative structure.” King, “Astrolabes, Quadrants, and Calculating Devices”; and North, *Cosmos*, 197, 204–05. The astrolabe was transmitted to Europe from Iberia in the eleventh century; the excitement it generated may be measured by the name the ill-fated lovers Abelard and Heloise chose for their son in the mid-twelfth century, and by the unfinished *Treatise on the Astrolabe* that Geoffrey Chaucer composed for his son in the late fourteenth.

88 Djebbar, “Al-Mu’taman ibn Hüd,” 201. For a suggestion of how Frederick’s learning participated in his cultivation of a recognizably Mediterranean model of kingship, see Kinoshita, “Translatio/n, Empire,” 376.

matic, and economic measures mobilized by his father and grandfather, Al-Ashraf 'Umar's added the profile of a scholar-prince whose works both documented the sultanate's prosperity and enhanced its dynastic prestige.

Unlike the majority of sites described in the *Devisement du monde*, Aden never came under Mongol rule, and the Polos, as we have noted, likely did not know it from firsthand experience. At the same time, it was a crucial pivot between Indian Ocean system, source of the coveted spices and other exotic commodities that formed an important part of Venetian trade, and the commercial networks of the medieval Mediterranean.⁸⁹ The ebb and flow of its prosperity was inseparable from the larger dynamics of trans-Asian communication, the competition between the Red Sea and Persian Gulf maritime routes, the connection or disruption of land routes through Mongol-controlled regions.

Conclusion

History on the scale of the Mongol century sometimes calls forth a desire for human agency, for the intimacy of the biographical. In the case of the *Devisement du monde*, this has on occasion taken the form—misleadingly, as I have suggested elsewhere—of construing Marco Polo not simply as the author/narrator but as the heroic first-person protagonist of his own adventure tale.⁹⁰ This essay, in contrast, has taken the *Devisement* as a matrix on which to build a connected history, a framing device to link the lives of extraordinary individuals like Zhao Mengfu and Al-Ashraf 'Umar and more ordinary ones like Takezaki Suenaga, caught up in the sweep of a turbulent time. Assembling their stories, in turn, animates the places and cultures Marco Polo passes in review, giving us a more textured understanding of the new political, economic, and cultural conditions that helped to enable his journey and that formed his book in the first place.

⁸⁹ On the sultan of Aden's active influence in the Indian Ocean at the time of Marco Polo, see Lambourn, "India from Aden."

⁹⁰ Kinoshita, "Traveling Texts."

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Sharon Kinoshita (sakinosh@ucsc.edu) teaches world literature and cultural studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is the author of *Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature* (2006) and numerous other works in medieval French and Mediterranean Studies. She has translated Marco Polo's *Description of the World* for Hackett Press and is currently at work on a book provisionally entitled *Re-Orientations: The Worlding of Marco Polo*.

Abstract In the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and postcolonial theory, Marco Polo is often cast as a quintessentially Western observer of Asian cultures. This essay seeks to break his text out of the binaries in which it is frequently understood. Returning the text to its original title, "The Description of the World," it reconstructs the diversity of late thirteenth-century Asia through the portraits of three figures who were Marco's contemporaries.

Keywords Marco Polo, Mongol empire, Yuan painting, medieval Japan, astrolabe.

JAPAN ON THE MEDIEVAL GLOBE: THE WAKAN RŌEISHŪ AND IMAGINED LANDSCAPES IN EARLY MEDIEVAL TEXTS

ELIZABETH OYLER

THE VERY IDEA of “the medieval” (*chūsei* 中世) in Japan grew out of Japan’s encounter with the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. What constitutes Japan’s medieval period, as well as its rough beginning and end dates, are still matters of debate, but scholars generally agree that the period from the late twelfth through late fifteenth centuries CE—an epoch marked by the presence of the Minamoto (1192–1333) and Ashikaga (1338–1573) shogunal houses—is “medieval.”¹ In this essay, I discuss two works written at specific moments during this period, the travelogue *Kaidōki* (海道記 “Travels on the [Eastern] Seaboard,” author unknown, 1223) and the *nō* play *Tsunemasa* (経正 “Tsunemasa,” playwright unknown, ca. early fifteenth century) to elucidate one way that the Japanese positioned their realm in a world context during a period when the polity was becoming decentered and its internal geography was being reshaped. My interest in these two works is their depiction of significant sites—first, the city of Kamakura, shogunal headquarters from 1192–1333; and second, Ninnaji 仁和寺, a Shingon Buddhist temple in the capital, founded in 888 by the retired emperor Uda (宇多天皇, 867–931, r. 887–97) and closely allied with the imperial family. Both spaces are loci of authority and power, described in works created at moments when authority was in flux. Both *Kaidōki* and *Tsunemasa* rely heavily on the poetry anthology the *Wakan rōeishū* (和漢朗詠集 “Collection of Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing,” compiled by Fujiwara no Kintō 藤原公任, [966–1041] ca. 1013) to delineate these extraordinary sites. Although the *Wakan rōeishū* influenced numerous gen-

I Although the Ashikaga continued to occupy the position of shogun until the late sixteenth century, by the mid fifteenth they had effectively lost control of large areas of the realm: a specific end-date for ‘the medieval period’ is hard to pin down. A beginning date is also hard to locate. In *Eccentric Spaces, Hidden Histories*, Bialock characterizes Japan’s medieval period as extending “roughly from the late eleventh to the late fourteenth centuries, beginning with the emergence of rule by retired sovereigns and ending with the appearance of *Taiheiki* after the defeat of Go-Daigo that forms a major part of its subject matter” (217). This definition takes in the forces that directly contributed to the Genpei War that brought the first shogunate to power and that complicated the traditional paradigm linking periodization specifically to ruling houses. LaFleur, in his introduction to *Karma of Words*, locates the beginning date earlier as well, since he frames “the medieval” in Buddhist terms. He posits the beginning of the medieval in Japan in the middle of the Heian period (794–1185).

res during the medieval period, the use of allusions drawn from this anthology to frame landscapes associated with power raises a set of questions that help to elucidate Japan's relation to the medieval globe: how does this collection of poems written in two languages, and by poets from two cultures, create a way of reimagining "Japan"? And how might the shared ways in which the source is deployed in these two very different works tell us about what it means to be "medieval" in Japan?

The Medieval Era in Japan

Although some scholars locate the beginnings of Japan's medieval age during the Heian period (794–1185), most agree that the Genpei War (1180–85) marked an important turn toward "the medieval" in Japanese culture. The realm's first large-scale civil conflict, the Genpei War challenged Japan's traditional political structure and the centrality of its long-standing capital city, Heian-kyō 平安京 (present-day Kyoto). The war was fought between scions of two military clans, the Taira (or Heike 平家, "Taira family"), which rose precipitously to the highest echelons of power during the 1160s and 70s, and the Minamoto (or Genji 源氏, "Minamoto clan"), which had suffered under the Taira ascendancy. The war ended with a complete Minamoto victory.²

One result of the war was the establishment of a military headquarters, or *bakufu* 幕府, by the new shogun Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝 (1147–99), in Kamakura 鎌倉, five hundred kilometers from the capital city. Although he never threatened to overturn the emperor or the central bureaucracy, Yoritomo asserted authority across the realm through appointees in provincial government offices and on estates. This attenuation of central authority was unprecedented and would remain part of the political landscape through the early modern period.³ The Minamoto domination of the position of shogun was short lived, however: following the death of the third and final Minamoto shogun in 1219, the office became the puppet of a regency controlled by the family of Yoritomo's wife, Hōjō Masako 北条政子 (1156–1225).

The years that followed were turbulent. In 1221, imperial partisans clashed with the shogun in an attempt to reassert imperial power, but were put down quickly by shogunal forces in what is known as the Jōkyū uprising. *Kaidōki* was

² For a description of the war and its aftermath, see Oyler, introduction to *Like Clouds or Mists*, ed. Oyler, 10–22.

³ For discussions of the complexity of early *bakufu*/court relations, see Mass, *Court and Bakufu* and Yoritomo and the *Founding of the First Bakufu*. *Bakufu* is a term used to refer to the shogunal offices in Kamakura: it was essentially a new government branch, established far from the older governmental offices of the capital, and overseen by the shogun.

written just two years after this event and makes reference to it. In 1274 and 1281, the shogun's army repelled two Mongol invasions, but at great cost. The Kamakura shogunate was then betrayed and overthrown in 1333 by former retainer Ashikaga Takauji 足利尊氏 (1305–58). After breaking with his benefactor, Emperor Go-Daigo 後醍醐 (1288–1339; r. 1318–39), the new shogun Takauji set up his headquarters in Heian-kyō and backed a rival monarch. For six decades, the imperial house was split, with the “northern court” in Heian-kyō supported by the shogun, and the “southern court” in possession of the imperial regalia in exile in the mountainous Yoshino region south of Heian-kyō. Only in 1392, under the stewardship of Takauji's grandson, Yoshimitsu 義満 (1358–1408), was the imperial line reunited and peace restored, if only for a short while. The *nō* theater emerged under Yoshimitsu's patronage, and it is likely that *Tsunemasa*, a play set during the Genpei War, was composed during Yoshimitsu's lifetime or shortly thereafter.

For Japanese in the thirteenth century and beyond, the establishment of the Kamakura shogunate following the Genpei War was seen as a turning point, because of both the bifurcation of power it represented and the symbolic losses that accompanied the end of the war. The child emperor, born to a Taira mother, had drowned in the final sea battle, taking with him one of the three imperial regalia: a sword. The conclusion of the war thus fundamentally altered the political, symbolic, and actual landscapes: never before had a marker of imperial authority been lost, and never before had an organ of the government with authority reaching across the realm been located anywhere other than the capital city. What would follow over the next several centuries only intensified the sense of distance from the classical past.

Because the establishment of the warrior *bakufu* opened up terrain physically and symbolically, attempts to describe and contain the realm's unfamiliar political and geographical contours were part and parcel to the arts flourishing during the medieval period. The two works considered here illustrate this process. The *Kaidōki* author is interested in capturing on paper the meaning and appearance of the just-founded military capital at Kamakura, whereas *Tsunemasa* describes a space associated with imperial and religious authority in the capital shortly after the northern and southern courts were finally reunited. Both works specifically address new or newly reconfigured political spaces in the shadow of political upheaval.

One long-standing recourse in Japan for describing anything unusual was allusion to a Chinese antecedent; examples can be found in early histories, poetry, collections of anecdotes (*setsuwa* 説話), and narrative works like *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari* 源氏物語, authored by Murasaki Shikubu 紫式部, ca. 1008 CE). But allusion to Chinese originals takes on a different significance in works of the medieval period, when formerly unremarkable locales become the topic of narrative and drama. In this context, the *Wakan rōeishū* becomes a means to convey

at once convergence and divergence from earlier norms. How is allusion to China through this text activated, and what can that process tell us about how medieval Japan saw itself on if not the globe, at least the world map?

Writing China in Japan: The *Wakan rōishū* and Other Sources

From its earliest days, the Japanese polity looked to its established and powerful continental neighbor for inspiration. Japan's "permanent" capital cities (Nara and Kyoto) were laid out following the model of Chang'an, the Tang capital. China's bureaucratic system of governance, as well as its political, social, and religious thought systems, were imported and adapted as the Japanese polity developed in the seventh and eighth centuries CE. Most important for this study are Japan's formative bilingualism and its reliance on the Chinese writing system: Chinese was Japan's first written language, and the vernacular syllabic system derived from Chinese characters.⁴

Chinese remained the language of official documents and records in Japan well into the early modern period. Educated men were expected to be literate in it and also to be familiar with many of the best-known Chinese texts and authors, including historical records like the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian) and *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Book of the Later Han); prominent poets (particularly the Tang-period masters Du Fu 杜甫, Li Bo 李白, and Wang Wei 王維, but also Bai Juyi 白居易); the philosophical works of Confucius, Mencius, and others; and the religious texts of Buddhism.

The Chinese writing system could not be adopted easily to represent the vernacular, however, and over the course of the ninth century, Chinese characters were adapted to represent the phonetic units of the Japanese language, thus enabling people to express themselves in writing in both languages. From at least the early tenth century, these two modes were recognized as different: writing in the syllabic *kana* 仮名 was referred to as the "women's hand," while writing in Chinese or a slight modification of it was the "men's hand." Women were not expected to write Chinese, although female writers Sei Shonagon and Murasaki Shikibu of the Heian period intimate that they, and other women like them, were familiar with Chinese works as well.⁵ Both men and women were expected to be able to write, and particularly write *waka* poetry, in *kana*. The "women's hand"

⁴ For recent discussions about the complexity of Japan's bilingualism from earliest times, see Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, and Denecke, *Classical World Literatures*.

⁵ See Kamens, "Terrains of Text," 130–32, for a discussion of women's literacy in both languages.

and “men’s hand” were broad categories, and there were other ways of thinking about reading and writing as well; but throughout Japanese history, the juxtaposition between *wa* (和), referring to *kana* (and the vernacular), and *kan* (漢), referring to Chinese characters (and Chinese language; these are the “*wakan*” of the *Wakan rōeishū*) was widely accepted, and both languages and the various forms they encompassed were vitally important throughout the classical and medieval periods, as recent scholars have indicated.⁶

In the realm of poetry, the Chinese/Japanese pairing was manifest as *waka* 和歌 (Japanese verse) and *kanshi* 漢詩 (Chinese poetry). Both forms enjoyed popularity among aristocrats (although *kanshi* were in principle limited to male writers through the medieval period, while both men and women wrote *waka*). Additionally, as in China, exemplary couplets (*kaku* 佳句) excerpted from longer works were revered, collected, and anthologized in early Japan, both as models for those learning Chinese and also as representatives of the Chinese tradition.⁷

The *Wakan rōeishū*, compiled between 1013 and 1020 by Fujiwara no Kintō, is an aesthetically playful engagement with the differences between the two languages.⁸ A collection of over eight hundred famous works, it consists of poetry and prose couplets in Chinese: *kanshi* (Chinese poems by Japanese poets) and *waka* (Japanese poems by Japanese poets). It was enormously influential and admired.⁹ The *Wakan rōeishū* comprises two scrolls (*kan* or *maki* 巻): it follows the seasonal arc from spring through winter in the first scroll; in the second, poems are organized thematically, under categories that seem at least in part derivative of earlier collections, starting with “wind” and moving through “monkeys and recluses to courtesans and the color white.”¹⁰ Valued in aristocratic circles more for its Chinese couplets than its *waka*, the *Wakan rōeishū* was a well-known text in its time and became the object of significant commentary throughout the medieval and early modern period.¹¹

⁶ For example, Kamens, “Terrains of Text”; and Smits, “Way of the Literati.”

⁷ Smits, “Song as Cultural History,” 234.

⁸ Kintō was perhaps the most important arbiter of taste for his generation, appearing in Murasaki Shikibu’s memoir as a formidable poetry critic in both formal and informal settings; he was also brother-in-law to Emperor En’yu. See Smits, “Song as Cultural History,” 226–27.

⁹ I follow Rimer and Chaves in delineating three categories of entries: couplets (from Chinese works by Chinese writers), *kanshi* (poems in Chinese by Japanese writers), and *waka* (poems in Japanese). See *Wakan rōeishū*, ed. Rimer and Chaves.

¹⁰ Smits, “Song as Cultural History,” 235.

¹¹ Ibid., 239–45.

All *Wakan rōeishū* quotations in *Kaidōki* and *Tsunemasa* are indeed from these “Chinese” categories. Why are they quoted in these works, and how does the *Wakan rōeishū* as source text help shape the way we might interpret both the allusions and the works themselves?

Travels to the East Country: *Kaidōki*

Travel is a long-standing trope in Japanese literature: it is an established topic for poetry from the early Heian period, and works that range from Ki no Tsurayuki’s *Tosa nikki* 土佐日記 (ca. 935) and the *Kagero nikki* 蜻蛉日記 by the mother of Michitsuna (ca. 974) onward are framed as records of journeys. Exilic trips include those found in *Kojiki* 古事記 (ca. 812) and in *Nihon shoki*’s 日本書紀 (ca. 820) accounts of Yamato takeru or the early *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語 (ca. early ninth century) are fundamental in the development of both narrative and poetic traditions. *Ise monogatari* in particular stands as an important precursor for *Kaidōki*, as its “*Azuma kudari*” (descent to the east country) exilic sequence was the first influential poetic mapping of Azuma, the land east of the capital region, including some of the route followed by the *Kaidōki* narrator. At critical poetic locations (*nadokoro* 名所), *Ise*’s poems are inevitable referents for the *Kaidōki* narrator and other travelers of later generations.

Written in 1223, *Kaidōki* is distinguished as being the earliest major medieval travelogue to address journeying from Heian-kyō to the new *bakufu* at Kamakura.¹² The “*Kaidō*” of the title is an abbreviation of *Tōkaidō* 東海道, the “Eastern Seaboard Route,” a long-established road that mostly followed the coastline from Heian-kyō to the provinces of the eastern seaboard and was used for transporting people and tax goods between the capital city and the eastern provinces; it was also more or less the route east charted in *Ise monogatari*. When Yoritomo founded Kamakura as his headquarters, however, the *Tōkaidō* became even more meaningful because there was now an important terminus at the shogunal seat. Although the *bakufu* at Kamakura always recognized the sovereignty of the emperor, it also became an alternative locus for a certain set of bureaucratic affairs, including the adjudication of land disputes, any other contests involving members of the warrior class, and perceived threats against shogunal authority. In the early modern period when the Tokugawa shoguns established their headquarters at Edo (present-day Tokyo), the route would become celebrated in a wide range of literary,

¹² Others include *Tōkan kikō* (ca. 1242, anonymous) and *Izayoi nikki* (1283, Nun Abutsu). Additionally, travel songs about the *Tōkaidō* were becoming popular at this time, and we find frequent borrowings in both war tales and *nō* plays from all of these works.

dramatic, and visual arts; but in the 1220s, its role as the route between Heian-kyō and Kamakura was still developing, and the idea that it had a noteworthy destination at its eastern terminus challenged the traditional geographies of power.¹³

Kaidōki thus at once embraces a tradition of travel narrative and brings new dimensions to it. The author is unknown, although the text has been attributed mistakenly both to Kamo no Chōmei 鴨長明 (ca. 1153–1216) and to Minamoto no Mitsuyuki 光行 (1163–1244).¹⁴ Scholars generally divide *Kaidōki* into three sections: a prologue (*jo* 序), a dated travelogue (the longest section), and a conclusion. Throughout *Kaidōki*, the narrative style varies fairly dramatically. The prologue and conclusion, in particular, exhibit a version of *wakan konkōbun* (和漢混交文 mixed Japanese/Chinese style) with strong reliance on “Chinese” (*kan*) expressions and syntax; this is a style familiar in the works of Buddhist essayists and thinkers. The main travelogue, by contrast, contains more lyrical *wabun* passages embracing the narrative genre taking shape in the medieval period, which we refer to now as *michiyuki-bun* 道行文 (poetic travelogue).¹⁵ It is further marked by repetitions and abrupt changes both stylistically and in direction, which is one of the characteristics that makes this text so historically and narratively significant: on the one hand, it is more than a daily record of a journey; but on the other, it also is not the carefully crafted poetic travelogue we see in the more influential *Tōkan kikō* 東関紀行, written approximately twenty years later.

Kaidōki is putatively a first-person narrative of a pilgrimage-cum-sightseeing tour to Kamakura undertaken by an unnamed, middle-aged Buddhist novice, clearly a man of erudition and means, who wants to see the great temples of Kamakura. Composed two years after the ill-fated Jōkyū uprising (1221), it was written with that failed coup in mind. Intermingled with its descriptions of the scenery along the way to Kamakura, we find a haunting rumination on the sad fates of imperial partisans killed in the conflict, most prominently Fujiwara Nakamikado Chūnagon Muneyuki 藤原中御門中納言宗行 (1174–1221), who was executed along the route as he was taken in captivity to Kamakura.¹⁶ Although the specter of Muneyuki’s own tragic journey is not within the scope of this essay, its memory as evoked in this text is centrally important for any consideration of

13 For discussions of the Tōkaidō in the Edo period, see Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity*; Traganou, *Tokaido Road*.

14 Takeda, *Kaidōki zenshaku*, 534–37. Takeda relies on the Maeda-ke *Kamakura kikō* (a copy, *shahon* 写本) as its base text.

15 Chiba and Komura, “Kikōbun *Kaidōki* ni tsuite,” esp. 3.

16 For discussions of the role of this embedded narrative, see Ide, “*Kaidōki* to Jōkyū no ran”; also Tonekawa, “*Kaidōki* no rekishisei,” 385–92.

Kaidōki, because it mourns that hero's loss on a structural level, as the narrative starts and stops and repeats itself several times, never bringing that loss to closure. In other words, there is a counternarrative about the frightfulness of the warrior capital embedded in the description of its glories, and the reader is left with the impression of the narrator's ambivalence about the goal of his journey. Indeed, as though to mark this ambivalence, Kamakura is described twice in the text: first in the prologue, which contains an abbreviated description of the narrator's prospective journey; and once in the travelogue, after he has reached his destination.

My interest here is in the poet's consistent reliance on other sources, and particularly the *Wakan rōeishū*, to give shape to his own multi-layered understanding of what Kamakura means as a physical and textual space. The inscription of Chinese landscape on Kamakura occurs on a number of levels in *Kaidōki*. First, we find the explicit mapping of other sites onto it in the prologue (a pattern that will be repeated in *Tsunemasa* as well: see below). Second—and this occurs throughout the narrative—there is a syntactic and lexical mapping of the “foreign” onto the domestic in the travelogue's description of the warrior capital. Syntactically, this is manifest in the symmetrical sentence structure borrowed from Chinese (also used liberally in contemporary *kanbun* texts). Lexically, it occurs through allusions or other references that evoke a discursive sphere strongly coded as “Chinese.”

The prologue of *Kaidōki* opens with the narrator outlining his personal circumstances. He is a Buddhist novice in his fifties, living in the Shirakawa district of the capital. Although predictably modest about his accomplishments, he demonstrates from the opening line that he is well versed in the Chinese classics, which has the effect of situating the narrative as a dialogue with a specific set of continental originals. He first compares himself to famous Chinese historical figures: he claims to be neither the wise Bo Yi (伯夷) nor the famed physician Hua Tuo (華佗).¹⁷ We should bear in mind that characterizing oneself as inferior to exemplary models is almost a cliché: what matters here is the fact that the referents are Chinese. The memorable past, in other words, is continental, and the well-educated man examines his life through that tradition as if in a mirror: here, he is the (pale) reflection of Chinese originals. In addition to delineating the identity of the narrator, the thematization of the Chinese past in *Kaidōki* creates a sense

17 Bo Yi was an ancient Chinese character famed for his moral rectitude and wisdom. He cautioned the ruler of Zhou not to attack the despotic Shang emperor, but was dismissed; he then retreated to the mountains, refused to eat foods belonging to Zhou, and eventually starved to death. He was posthumously elevated in rank in 1102, during the Song period. Hua Tuo (ca. 140–208 CE) was a renowned surgeon and physician mentioned in the Record of the Three Kingdoms (*Sanguozhi*, ca. third century) and the Record of the Later Han (*Hou Hanshu*, ca. fifth century). See Takeda, *Kaidōki zenshaku*, 30–31.

of continuity between the two realms. For our Japanese novice, the past of China is also the past of Japan. By demonstrating his knowledge of Chinese history, he thus creates a lineage for himself and his Japanese readers that includes China, but is simultaneously Japanese: like the Chinese and Japanese writing systems, the differentiation is based on a shared original source. Further, these references are textually mediated. China of old is China as described in revered works from that realm. By underlining the mediated nature of his relationship to China, the narrator draws attention to the significance to the imaginary nature of his descriptions as well as to his erudition.

The narrator then turns his thoughts to his destination, Kamakura:

The district of Kamakura in Sagami Province is the Sojuon on earth; it is the fortress at Yangzhou in our realm.¹⁸ Powerful warriors are a forest, the flower of their might opens luxuriantly; they flourish along the path of the warrior, they can hit a willow leaf from a hundred paces. Their bows resemble the crescent moon at dawn; pulled taut across the chest, they gleam. Their swords are like autumn frost; the long blades dangle at the waist, shining coldly. In the heat of battle, they use their claws as shields to subjugate their enemies. The generals join with their comrades as they embrace bravery. Their weapons inspire awe; birds of prey are afraid to fly above. Their punishments treat offenders harshly; those beasts are long kept at bay. Because of this, the spring buds of the realm receive blessings of the vernal winds from the east, and the sound of the tides of the Four Seas, warmed by the eastern sun, are quieted.¹⁹

The characteristic syntactic symmetry (*taishō* 対称) in this passage gestures to the Chinese couplet, while the hypotactic structure creates a textual landscape onto which individual images and phrases are placed. Immediately, the two non-Japanese spaces are mapped onto the new city: “Kamakura is the Sojuon of the earthly realm and the fortress of Yangzhou in this realm.” The comparisons are strongly stated metaphors: Kamakura *is* each of them “on earth” and in “our realm.” We are, in other words, invited to see both places when we imagine Kamakura. Both of the “foreign” sites evoked here, moreover, have strong military connotations: Sojuon is the mythical weapons storehouse of Śakra, the Deva King, who dwells at the top of Mount Sumeru, realm of the Devas. When the god needs to do battle to defend Buddhism, weapons magically appear at Sojuon. A reference to Sojuon

¹⁸ Sojoun is the Outer Garden of the Palace of Śakra, Lord of Devas (Japanese: *Taishakuten* 帝釈天); this is where he has his weapon storehouse. Yangzhou is a famed fortress erected by the Tang polity on the southern frontier in the late eighth century.

¹⁹ Takeda, *Kaidōki zenshaku*, 31. All *Kaidōki* translations are by the author.

in the widely read *Ōjōyōshū* (往生要集 “Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land” by Genshin 鑑真, 985) suggests that the topos was familiar to Japanese readers.²⁰ The Fortress at Yangzhou was known in Japan from a poem by Tang poet Bai Juyi, where it symbolizes unmovable defense able to withstand external threat.²¹ Kamakura in the narrator’s imagination becomes these locales, in effect replicating not only foreign but also fabled sites on the Japanese landscape.

Other references to China as mediated by texts are embedded in this description as well. The line “they can hit a willow leaf from a hundred paces” comes from the story of Yang Yu, the archer of Chu found in the Chinese court history *Shiji*. But perhaps more interesting is the integration of lines from the *Wakan rōeishū*: “Their bows resemble the crescent moon at dawn; pulled taut across the chest, they gleam. Their swords are like autumn frost; the long blades dangle at their waists, shining coldly.”

This passage draws from a pair of couplets from the “Generals” section of the *Wakan rōeishū*:

687. A three-foot flash of sword light:

Ice is in his hand!

A single arc of bow force:

The moon is in his chest!

Lu Hui 陸翬²²

686. Male sword at his waist

When he draws it: three feet of autumn frost

‘Female ochre’ from his mouth

when he chants, the sound of cold jade.

Minamoto Shitagō 源順²³

The first couplet is by Chinese poet Lu Hui (Tang dynasty), the second by Japanese poet Minamoto Shitagō (911–83 CE). Both evoke continental scenes, just as their

²⁰ Ibid., 33–34.

²¹ “Walling Yangzhou,” a *Xin yuefu* poem presented to the Tang emperor Xianzong (r. 805–20). *Xin yuefu* was a “folk” style of poetry popular during the Tang period. The meter was irregular, the voice often that of a humble character, and the subjects sometimes satirical. For a discussion of this poem, see Twitchett, “Tibet,” 106–09. Bai Juyi is famously more revered in Japan than in China. The narrativity and direct style of his poems are often cited as the reason for his popularity in Japan; this is particularly evident in the consideration of *Tsunemasa*, below.

²² *Wakan rōeishū*, ed. Rimer and Chaves, 204; *Wakan rōeishū*, ed. Kawaguchi and Shida, 226.

²³ *Wakan rōeishū*, ed. Rimer and Chaves, 206; *Wakan rōeishū*, ed. Kawaguchi and Shida, 227.

syntax suggests Chinese style. And, like the comparisons to Sojuon and Yangzhou, they label Kamakura as a military site. Note that in *Kaidōki*, the couplets are woven together on the page to create a prose image that at once echoes and alters the originals: the phrases are familiar, but they are inscribed in a unique way; they are at once Chinese and domestic.

As a text, the *Wakan rōeishū* embodies a similarly relational structure, where parts of Chinese and Japanese poems are brought into dialogue to evoke a rich and novel pattern of images about a specific topic. We should consider the possibility that this arrangement also serves as one important way of structuring narrative, a method with which the *Kaidōki* narrator experiments as he describes the landscape of the unknown Kamakura. In effect, the *Kaidōki* narrator follows Kintō, the compiler of the *Wakan rōeishū*, in taking fragments of longer works and arranging them to create original meanings. Here, the warriors of Kamakura are created from bits and pieces of couplets from the Chinese tradition. As we see in the second couplet, no attempt is made to maintain the wholeness of an individual poem. Rather, the narrator reworks parts of it in conversation with other pieces.²⁴ Thus, *Kaidōki* creates a pattern of modeling and layering that finds a syntactical analogue in the *kanshi* couplet and a textual one in the grouping of poems on similar topics written in both Chinese and Japanese. These levels of meaning are as important as the content of the quotations themselves: the organizational model provides guidance for reading the layering of other identities onto Kamakura. Rather than erasure, we might see instead a more experimental and inclusive mapping that allows the imagined Kamakura to embrace these other identities.²⁵

We can see this sort of juxtaposition and layering on another important level as well. There is a permeability between Kamakura and its residents, the warriors, who do not so much inhabit the land as embody it: they are “a forest”; their might is a flower that blossoms; their bows are the crescent moon; their swords the frost. Out of an awesome landscape the warriors emerge as more primal than human, using their nails or claws to defeat their enemies, like beasts and birds of prey. Furthermore, this scene is framed in terms of punishment. Although such imagery is not unusual in descriptions of warriors in battle, this is a description of

24 Some of these images are clearly part of broader Chinese vocabularies—the three-foot sword, for example, appears in a famous death poem attributed to the founder of the Han dynasty—they seem to be filtered through *Wakan rōeishū*, which, by 1223, served as an important conduit through which the Chinese tradition was interpreted and appreciated by the Japanese elite.

25 Atsuko Sakaki refers to the organization of *Wakan rōeishū* as having the effect of “both diminish[ing] and confirm[ing] the distance between the audience and the ‘original’ sources” (*Obsessions*, 109).

a capital ostensibly at peace. The raging beasts arise out of a quiet, if strange, landscape and then are quickly submerged back into it, becoming the vernal breezes and the eastern sun, which bring tranquility to the spring forest that is the realm. Diachronically, there is narrative progression toward conclusion, but both syntax and structure here suggest the importance of a synchronic reading as well. This is a space that layers and brings into dialogue vicious punishment and tranquility, just as it does foreign and domestic phenomena. This is an ambivalent landscape imagined by an equally ambivalent narrator.

When Kamakura is depicted again, it is within the context of the travelogue. The narrator has described his journey there, and what will follow are several days of sight-seeing (and then a rather precipitous return to Heian-kyō, prompted by concern over the aging mother he left behind).²⁶ After recovering from the journey, he goes out and begins to take in his surroundings:

When I went out and looked around, the place wanted for nothing by way of scenery: there was the sea, there were the mountains; water and trees were abundant. It was not too open, nor was it too cramped, and the city streets branched out in all directions. There were gathering places and meeting places; in comparing this hamlet to the capital, the vistas were striking. Great men were gathered here, wise men were gathered, their gates aligned, the land prosperous. When I peeked in through a crack and with awe gazed upon the residence of the shogun, it spread out grandly, the color of the blue-green blinds seemed to embody the happiness there, the vermilion balustrades were truly exquisite, the pavement below glistened as though strewn with pearls. The voice of the cuckoo greeting the spring joined the lively chatter of the esteemed guests in the hall; from early morning the fine steeds of the guests were arrayed before the gate.²⁷

Note that symmetrical syntax continues to shape the work. In contrast to the hyperbolic imagined Kamakura of the prologue, here we find here a more concrete landscape that serves as a backdrop for the human activity happening within it. This image is familiarizing: the description of the landscape follows the speaker's eye through viewed rather than imagined space, moving from the natural surroundings to the gatherings of people in the town's center, then narrowing further to peep through an opening in the fence at the dwelling of the shogun.

26 There is a misnumbering of days within the text, and there are in essence two entries for the thirteenth day. The journey was in fact one day longer than the fourteen recorded by the narrator. Takeda, *Kaidōki zenshaku*, 542.

27 *Ibid.*, 424.

As in much of the travelogue—save, importantly, in the sections recalling the doomed warrior Muneyuki, which are more complex—the narrator marvels at the unexpectedness of the natural world in this eastern locale, but simultaneously anchors it within the quotidian. People bustle about as they do in the capital; the dwelling of the shogun is remarkable mainly for the (albeit opulent) conventionality of its fixtures. Yet even here, the narrator's vision is mediated by *Wakan rōeishū* couplets:

64. Whose house is it where emerald trees
 Have warblers singing though silken curtains still stand?
 And where the painted hall
 Awakened from dreams though pearl-sewn blinds have not yet been rolled up?
 Attributed to Xie Guan 謝觀 (Tang period)²⁸

558. Gazing South, there stretches the length of the road toward mountain passes:
 Travelers and journeying horses are seen flowing past
 from under blue-green blinds.
 Looking East, there too the marvel of tree-lined embankments:
 Purple ducks and white gulls frolicking before the vermilion balustrades.
 Minamoto Shitagō²⁹

Note that the clear Chinese references here are situated in the prosaic scene of the narrator peeping in on the shogunal residence. The mansion is presented in terms of a continental landscape, but, as earlier, the narrator here arranges pieces of that venerable landscape to delineate the visible features of the shogun's newly built structure. The image of Kamakura in this passage is accordingly less alien and alienating than that found in the prologue. Notably, the *Wakan rōeishū* poems cited here come from the sections on "The Warbler" and "Mountain Home," and it is certainly fitting to read this shift as a sort of domestication: the once-unknown Kamakura has become familiar now that it has been seen; there is a movement toward narrative closure or comfort suggested in this second set of poetic referents. Yet the experience is still mediated by the *Wakan rōeishū*: its poems are the building blocks with which Kamakura is constructed and the lens through which the narrator experiences the world.

What does this mean for Japan on the medieval globe? Here, as in earlier texts, China is a model, an older civilization, for which the Japanese felt an affinity and beside which they placed their culture as an offshoot: geographically and cul-

²⁸ *Wakan rōeishū*, ed. Rimer and Chaves, 42–43; *Wakan rōeishū*, ed. Kawaguchi and Shida, 63.

²⁹ *Wakan rōeishū*, ed. Rimer and Chaves, 169; *Wakan rōeishū*, ed. Kawaguchi and Shida, 192.

turally, Japan was smaller and less ancient, peripheral to both China and India, the latter being the ultimate cultural referent where Buddhism was concerned. To an extent, the quotation of texts in Chinese to describe Kamakura nods to this relationship: Japan is made meaningful in the long shadow of its older and larger neighbor, and *Kaidōki* reaffirms the primacy of continental culture. But the reliance on the *Wakan rōeishū* is also connected to what is domestic, novel, and thus hard to describe: the bifurcated government, the suddenly meaningful space of Kamakura. While previous scholars have noted there this text valorizes Chinese over Japanese, I have argued that it is instead the juxtaposition of the two cultures—the way the text's *form* embraces plurality—that seems to motivate the borrowing.³⁰ These Chinese poems provide the reality that orders both the imagined and the experienced, implying an ongoing emphasis on both the mediated and multilayered nature of the Japanese narrator's perception. The *Wakan rōeishū* couplets are recontextualized on the local landscape, allowing the narrator to emphasize the value of maintaining multiplicity of vision and of voice, a voice predicated on an understanding that such mediated experience is the best and perhaps the only way to convey his meaning.

In *Kaidōki*, this seems to register a level of unease with the newness of Kamakura; the text embraces a complex desire on the one hand to create continuities and narrative closure (because Kamakura is like Yangzhou and Sojuon, it assures safety and a clear purpose), while on the other to maintain the possibility and insecurity suggested by the place (Kamakura is indescribable except through a multilingual vocabulary that expresses itself through multiplicity). The dialogue between domestic and foreign both authorizes the space as meaningful and allows its meaning to remain in question. We should bear in mind that the Other here is constructed completely within the Japanese imagination: the *Wakan rōeishū* is a quintessentially Japanese conceptualization of the world and *waka's* place in it. Mediated by the *Wakan rōeishū*, *Kaidōki* similarly creates Kamakura from an imaginary landscape. So in one important way, the world is not what is beyond political or cultural borders, but what can be imagined and recreated in the domestic mind and projected on the domestic landscape. At the same time, the text asserts that there is indeed an Other necessary to the description of the Japanese landscape, and that it is only through the heteroglossic description mediated by the *Wakan rōeishū* that the fullness of the domestic landscape can be captured.

30 Smits, "Song as Cultural History," 234.

The Nō *Tsunemasa*

The nō play *Tsunemasa* was created long after *Kaidōki*, but there are some striking similarities in the ways that it quotes the *Wakan rōeishū* to configure space; in fact, the temporal and generic distances between the two works demonstrate the vitality of the *Wakan rōeishū* as a cultural referent throughout Japan's medieval age and, I suggest, in response to ongoing political instability. *Tsunemasa* is classified as a *shura nō*: that is, a play in which the primary character, or *shite*, is the ghost of a warrior killed in battle. The earliest recorded performance of the play is from 1488, so we cannot tell whether it was among plays written or reworked in nō's formative years by nō's founding father Zeami 世阿弥 (ca. 1363–ca. 1443), who developed his art under the patronage of the third Ashikaga shogun, Yoshimitsu (although scholars generally believe that it was).³¹

In *Tsunemasa*, the space being configured is most fundamentally the nō stage, where Ninnaji, the most important Shingon Buddhist temple of the late Heian period, is recreated. The play evokes other spaces as well, however, through a narrative structure shared with a set of stories about Taira no Tsunemasa 平経政³² and his biwa (琵琶, a four- or five-stringed lute), tales derived from other narrative traditions. These scenes are evoked structurally through the play's staging of a religious ceremony at Ninnaji intended to commemorate Tsunemasa's battlefield death during the Genpei War. The secondary scenes are activated by quotations from the *Wakan rōeishū*. We find, in other words, the creation on the stage of a quintessentially Japanese space (the temple most closely affiliated with the imperial family) that is simultaneously imaged as the Chinese palace and a mythical island. How does this play position "Japan" in relation to its continental neighbor, and what can it suggest about the fantasies and anxieties about the Other for the medieval Japanese audience?

Tsunemasa is named for its eponymous *shite*. As with many important historical characters from the period, Tsunemasa is celebrated in the *Tales of the Heike* (Heike monogatari 平家物語), Japan's best-known and probably most influential medieval war tale (fourteenth century), which describes the causes and effects of the war. A high-ranking member of the defeated Taira clan, Tsunemasa dies without fanfare in an early battle, and is better remembered in the tale for his skill

³¹ The performance in 1488 is recorded in *Chikanaga kyōki*; see Kentarō, *Yōkyoku taikan*, 2083. Wakitani ("Taira no Tsunemasa to Tadanori," 209) posits that the play was composed at the time nō was being codified by early playwrights Zeami and his father Kan'ami. For a discussion of Yoshimitsu's ascension to and wielding of symbolic forms of power, which his patronage of the nō served, see Conlan, *From Sovereign to Symbol*, particularly chap. 7.

³² In the nō, his name is conventionally written with the characters 経正.

at the biwa. The *nō* play about him derives from episodes found in one or more variants of the *Heike* describing Tsunemasa's life (and the history of his biwa), and the various strands come together in this play in ways reminiscent of *Kaidōki*'s layering of landscapes. Among the approximately eighty variant textual lineages for the work, I primarily refer to the Kakuichi variant—a recitational text completed in 1371 and the basis for most translations into foreign languages—with occasional references to the Engyō-bon recension (1309), a non-recited variant. Recited variants were performed by blind men with religious or quasi-religious identities who accompanied themselves on the biwa. Known as *biwa hōshi* (琵琶法師 *biwa* priests), they were responsible for spreading the tale around the realm throughout the medieval period.³³ Non-recited variants like the Engyō-bon were not part of this tradition.

Tsunemasa's cultural presence is most memorably established in two episodes of the *Tales of the Heike*. We first encounter him in the "Chikubushima *mōde*" (竹生島詣で "The Pilgrimage to Chikubushima") episode. Sent north from the capital to attack the Minamoto leader Kiso Yoshinaka, Tsunemasa falls behind the main forces and pauses at Lake Biwa. Looking across the water, he sees the island of Chikubushima. Tsunemasa notes, "Surely though [...] Penglai [...] must look like this," evoking the fabled island of the immortals known from Chinese legend.³⁴ Crossing to the island with a small party, he spends the afternoon reciting sutras before the resident deity, Benzaiten 弁財天 (Sanskrit: Sarasvati, deity of eloquence and music), also referred to as Myōon 妙音 (deity of mysterious sound, also traced to Sarasvati). As night falls, the shrine's resident monks urge Tsunemasa to play one of the shrine's biwa. He performs two secret pieces,³⁵ and "the divinity, deeply moved, appeared on Tsunemasa's sleeve in the form of a white dragon" (one of her most well-known manifestations).³⁶ Notably, Tsunemasa's playing of secret pieces summons the god to appear at the shrine on Chikubushima, which Tsunemasa compares the island to Penglai, a topos from the Chinese cultural tradition popular in Japan as well. A few episodes later, we encounter Tsunemasa in the episode "Tsunemasa Departs the Capital," as he and his kinsman flee the oncoming forces led by Kiso no Yoshinaka. This is one of several scenes devoted to leave-takings by senior Taira nobles of those dear to them; in Tsunemasa's case, he pauses

33 For a discussion of the variant lines, see Oyler, *Swords, Oaths, and Prophetic Visions*, 9–18.

34 *Tale of the Heike*, 356.

35 *Jōgen* 上玄 and *Sekishō* 石上. "Secret pieces" are works only transmitted to elite performers by the masters who train them. That Tsunemasa knew secret pieces attests to his special skill as a lutenist.

36 Kajihara and Yamashita, *Heike monogatari* (*ge*), 9; *Tale of the Heike*, 356.

at the temple Ninnaji, where he had served as an acolyte during his youth and was beloved of the omuro 御室, or abbot, a prince of the blood. Tsunemasa entrusts his biwa, Seizan (青山 “Green mountain”) to the temple, afraid it will be lost or destroyed should he take it with him. Next, we encounter the story “Concerning Seizan,” an episode that, depending on the variant text, is included in “Tsunemasa Departs the Capital” or immediately follows it.

Tsunemasa’s biwa has the following history.³⁷ Seizan was one of three biwa acquired by Fujiwara no Sadatoshi 藤原貞敏 (807–67), who, during Emperor Ninmyō’s 仁明 reign (808–50, r. 833–50), had traveled to China to study with the lute master Lian Chengwu 廉妄夫.³⁸ Sadatoshi left China with Seizan, Kenjō 玄象, and Shishimaru 獅子丸. Shishimaru was lost at sea—a sacrifice to the dragon spirit thought to control storms—on the return voyage, and Seizan and Kenjō were dedicated to the royal family. In the 960s, Emperor Murakami 村上天皇 (926–67, r. 946–67) was visited by a ghost as he strummed Seizan. The ghost revealed itself to be the spirit of Lian Chengwu, suffering in the afterlife for having withheld one of the secret pieces he was to teach Sadatoshi. The ghost then took up the biwa, taught the piece to Murakami, and disappeared; no one dared play Seizan thereafter. It was finally entrusted to the Ninnaji abbot, who then gave it to Tsunemasa in recognition of his great talent when Tsunemasa was sent to Usa shrine as a royal envoy.

Note here again the appearance of a figure from the beyond conjured in response to the playing of a storied lute. The location is the royal palace. In the Engyō-bon, the story is repeated when Tsunemasa then plays at the Usa Hachiman shrine, far from the capital: his playing inspires the deity of Usa to manifest itself as a dragon above the main hall, and even the provincial monks of Usa “could not have mistaken the sound for that of a passing shower” (村雨とはまがわじものを *murasame to ha magawaji mono wo*).³⁹ This rendering is probably the basis for the description of the visit to Chikubushima in other texts, and all of these base stories inform the nō *Tsunemasa*. Finally, we should also note the nō play *Genjō*, concerning the other two lutes Sadatoshi received in China, Genjō (alt. Kenjō) and Shishimaru. In the play, Emperor Murakami’s ghost is the *shite* who appears to prevent the famed lutenist Fujiwara no Moronaga (1138–92) from traveling to the continent to study the secret pieces. Instead, he has the dragon king 竜神

37 The *Heike* account of the Seizan story probably originates in episodes about storied biwa in two collections of anecdotes (*setsuwa*), *Jikkinshō* (十訓抄 “Miscellany of Ten Maxims,” author unknown, 1252, and *Kojidan* (古事談 “Account of Ancient Times” by Mianmoto Akikane, ca. 1212). See Tomikura, *Heike zenchūshaku*, 419.

38 The Engyō-bon has 廉承夫; Tomikura notes that this is correct: *Heike zenchūshaku*, 419.

39 Kajihara and Yamashita, *Heike monogatari (ge)*, 53.

return the lost Shishimaru that had been held at the *ryūgu* 竜宮, the dragon palace beneath the sea. Moronaga also founds the Myō'on lineage of biwa playing, and was also known by the sobriquet Myō'on, a clear reference to the deity Benzaiten.⁴⁰

Tsunemasa is underlain by these stories. Like most *nō*, it relies heavily on the vocalized script, sparse musical accompaniment, stylized movements of the actors, and imagination of the audience to create its world on stage. But *Tsunemasa* is also a *shura nō*, which usually have two acts: in the first, the *shite* appears in disguise; and in the second, he reveals himself as the spirit of a dead warrior and enacts his suffering in the asura (*shura* 修羅) hell, where he is forced to do battle eternally. By contrast, *Tsunemasa* has only one act, and the *shite*'s post-humous sufferings are not the primary focus of his attachment to this world. Instead, the play describes the appearance of his ghost at the service where Seizan, his biwa, is being dedicated to the Buddha as an offering for his repose in the afterlife. Ever the musician, *Tsunemasa*'s ghost takes up the biwa and a delightful evening of music ensues before he is called back to the *shura* realm and disappears.⁴¹

Another striking feature of *Tsunemasa* is that it recreates worlds of the past differently than most *nō*. Like much of the repertoire, it quotes other texts to evoke conventional emotional responses and to recall famous earlier works and authors, a method of allusion referred to in Japanese as *honka dori* (本歌取り, generally translated as "allusive variation"). Thus, through an associative chain, the audience imagines a rich world of images, emotion, and history upon a relatively bare stage. Here, though, connections are activated not only through linear (historical) analogies but also through spatial juxtapositions that invite us to see them synchronously and in a different sort of relation to each other. This reading is encouraged by the play's strong reliance on the *Wakan rōishū*.

The premise for *Tsunemasa* is that the abbot of Ninnaji has decided to dedicate Seizan as part of a musical memorial service (管弦講 *kagen-kō*) for *Tsunemasa*. The abbot is represented in the play by the *waki*, or secondary character, the priest Gyōkei. Gyōkei explains that *Tsunemasa*'s death in battle has moved the abbot to offer Seizan as a prayer for *Tsunemasa*'s realization of perfect enlightenment.

40 One of the *naga* kings, all of whom were dragons and dwelt at the bottom of the sea. The dragon king and his residence, the Dragon Palace (*ryūgū*), were extremely important tropes in medieval literature and stories connected to the Genpei War in particular: one explanation for the drowning of the child-emperor in the final sea battle is that he was an incarnation of the Dragon King, and, in jumping from his boat as the Taira defeat neared, he returned to his original home. For a discussion of the trope, see Bialock, "Outcasts."

41 Shirasu, *Ryoshuku no hana*, 173.

Thus, as with many *shura nō*, there is a longstanding connection between the *shite* and the *waki*.⁴²

The *shite* now appears, beckoned by the goings-on. Like most *shite*, his entrance is accompanied by a quotation from the poetic past: “*Wind blowing through autumn trees / brings rain down from a clear sky; / moonlight shining on broad sands / spreads the night with glittering frost.*” He continues: “the momentarily visible dew in the shadow of the grasses—lingering because of this longing; how shameful!”⁴³ The italicized quotation is a couplet by Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), no. 150 in the *Wakan rōeishū*. Of all Tang-period poets, Bai Juyi’s influence is particularly strong in classical and medieval Japanese works, both in quotation and in literary allusion; his collected works (*Hakushi monjū* 白氏文集) were in circulation in Japan by the Heian period. He is also the best-represented Chinese poet in the *Wakan rōeishū*, and this poem is from the “Summer Nights” section of that collection.

The couplet describes a confusion of sights and sounds: wind as rain; moonlight as frost. Mistaking one (elegant) thing for another is a common rhetorical device found in Japanese poetry, but here such confusion is then echoed in Tsunemasa’s apparition. Gyōkei at first cannot be sure of his presence: ‘In the deep reaches of the night, / with the lamp burning low, / there comes within the flame / a human form, glimmering between the seen and the unseen. / Who is now before me?’⁴⁴ Prefaced by the Bai Juyi couplet, his lack of substance is at once eerie and elegant, a sense amplified as the play continues (and these alternate between *shite* and *waki*):

Shite: Was he real?
 Waki: Was nothing there?
 Shite: A mere shimmering
 Chorus: illusion, Tsunemasa’s
 transient form
 illusion, Tsunemasa’s
 transient form
 returns to this fleeting world⁴⁵

⁴² In the opening lines, the *waki* in fact quotes the familiar adage, “To share the shade of a tree, to drink from the same stream, all these are the result of karmic bonds” (Sanari, *Yōkyoku taikei*, 2085). Other *shura nō* where *shite* and *waki* are connected include *Atsumori* (where the *waki* is the *shite*’s killer) and, to a lesser extent, *Tadanori* and *Kanehira* (where the *waki* are connected to places or people close to the *shite*).

⁴³ Sanari, *Yōkyoku taikei*, 2086; Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 221.

⁴⁴ Sanari, *Yōkyoku taikei*, 2086; Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 221.

⁴⁵ Sanari, *Yōkyoku taikei*, 2087; Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 221–22.

This, the second scene, introduces the ghost as a shimmering apparition fading in and out, stressing his movement between the seen and unseen worlds—in this respect he is less corporeal than most *nō* ghosts, who appear and disappear mysteriously but are not described as being so ephemeral while on stage.

In the fourth scene, we again encounter a quotation from the *Wakan rōishū*. Gyōkei calls for the instrumentalists to begin to play to soothe Tsunemasa's spirit, and, as the others tune their instruments, Tsunemasa begins to tune Seizan:

- Shite: The spirit, still invisible, approaches the burning lamp
and tunes the biwa brought there for him.
- Waki: Resounds now, at this midnight hour,
midnight music to banish sleep.
- Shite: When—how strange!—the clear sky
clouds over, and all at once
the clamor of falling rain
- Waki: sweeps across grasses and trees,
threatening the tuning.
- Shite: But no, it is not rain, that sound!
- Chorus: See where yonder, from the clouds' edge.

Note here the echoes of the Usa performance, where the local monks were “in no danger of mistaking those brilliant notes for a passing shower.”⁴⁶ The play continues:

- But no, it is not rain, that sound!
See where yonder, from the cloud's edge,
Moonlight on Narabi-ga-oka
Illumines pine bought there, wind-tossed,
Sounding like a sudden shower.
An enchanting moment!
*The greater strings clamor loudly
Like a rain shower beating down;
The finer murmur on and on,
Like lovers' whisperings.*
- Chorus (kuse): *The first and second strings gust and rage
Like wind blustering through autumn pines;
The third and fourth cry out mournfully,
Like a caged crane by night calling her child.*

46 Kajihara and Yamashita, *Heike monogatari (ge)*, 51.

Be kind, O cocks who crow in the dawn,
let this night music never end!

Once again, the italicized segments are Chinese poems. The first is from Bai Juyi's *Pipa xing* 琵琶行 (Song of the Lute), the second, a *Wakan roeishū* couplet by the same poet. Both celebrate the playing of the strings, comparing their timbre to sounds in nature. Note the slippage from the actual natural images to the instruments' ability to recreate them. Confusing the sounds of a passing rain shower with the sound of the biwa nods to the Bai Juyi couplet in the first scene, drawing attention to a particular poet and to a particular meaning for music. Clearly, the *kagen-kō* is performing the extraordinary act of bringing the human, natural, and spiritual realms into harmony. Such is the power of music, particularly highly ritualized music performed as part of a Buddhist ceremony. And that power is expressed through references to Bai Juyi, the Chinese poet, again quoted from the *Wakan rōeishū*.

The segment concludes:

Shite: *When the music of the phoenix pipes*⁴⁷
Chorus: *shakes autumn clouds above the peak of Qin,*
Phoenixes, transported with delight,
fly down to bamboo, to parasol tree,
there to dance their pleasure, wing to wing.
Stirring strains in the modes, *ritsu* and *ryo*,⁴⁸
arouse deep feeling. As emotion mounts,
the dancers' waving sleeves recall
scenes from bygone days—silken sleeves
that bring to mind nearby Mt. Kinugasa.⁴⁹
How beautiful it is, the music of the night!⁵⁰

This passage begins with another quotation of a *Wakan rōeishū* poem, this time by Kong-sheng I 公乘憶 (no. 462). In the collection, it immediately precedes the Bai Juyi poem cited just above. Note the reference to harmonizing of the two major musical modes (*ritsu* and *ryo*), contextualized by the juxtaposition of Chinese (Qin Ridge) and Japanese (Narabigaoka, Mount Kinugasa) landscapes. The music

47 The shō 簫 (Ch. Sheng).

48 The two musical main classes of scales utilized in *gagaku* and *shōmyō*, traditional forms of court music and Buddhist chant, respectively. For *ritsu*, the third degree is a minor third above the final tone; and for *ryo*, the third degree is a major third above the final tone. Tokita and Hughes, "Context and Change," 19.

49 There is wordplay here: the "silken sleeves" evoke the *kinu* (silk) of Mount Kinugasa.

50 Sanari, *Yōkyoku taikai*, 2090–91; Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 223–24.

seems to bring together the imagined Chinese landscape and the familiar one of Ninnaji, but of course on the bare *nō* stage, all effected through quotation of the bilingual *Wakan rōeishū*.

The intertextual relations with the various stories from the *Heike* are fairly clear. The “Tsunemasa Departs from the Capital” episode is the basis, and the depth of the emotional bond between the *shite* and the abbot (and/or Gyōkei) from that narrative motivates the *kagen-kō* at the center of the play. Besides this episode, however, all the rest of Tsunemasa’s stories are vignettes of virtuoso, magical biwa performance. Each of these follows a similar pattern: a performer with uncanny skills plays the biwa, and a specter appears. The appearance is always felicitous. On the one hand, the tales are strung together through the transmission of special biwa or of secret knowledge: the instruments and the repertoire pass from Lian Chengwu to Sadatoshi to Murakami to Tsunemasa and Moronaga. The font is the continent, a concern emphasized through the quotation of famous Chinese poems about the nature of music that is, in turn, enacted on the stage. This is a typical variety of intertextuality in narrative traditions of the time, so it is not surprising to find it in a dramatic form with strong ties to existing narrative traditions.

But it is unusual to find the repetition of narrative structure, heightened by the structured spaces described in each antecedent tale and ultimately on the *nō* stage. All the scenes of virtuoso performance calling forth an apparition take place at demarcated sites: the palace, where Lian Chengwu visits Murakami; Chikubushima, the island shrine/temple complex that is home to Benzaiten; the Usa Hachiman Shrine. Chikubushima is further compared to Penglai, the fabled island of the immortals. Yet another landscape is suggested in Benzaiten’s alter ego as the dragon princess from the Lotus Sutra, resident of the dragon palace at the bottom of the sea. All these spaces are special, and all are bounded socially, politically, and/or religiously. All have specifically marked entrances and clear borders, and all are delineated as different from the everyday spaces around them—in this respect, they also recall the descriptions of Kamakura in *Kaidōki*.

The space of the play, interestingly, is the one locale in Tsunemasa’s story where a performance does not take place: Ninnaji. This raises the question: how might we interpret its representation in the *nō*? Historically, its associations with the imperial family mark it as a locus of imperial and religious authority. Established in 903 by the emperor Uda, it became his residence after his retirement, and princes of the blood served as abbots there from that time forward. Ninnaji represented the pinnacle of the Shingon establishment both during the Genpei War and throughout the time when the works considered here were written and first circulated. In *Tsunemasa*, then, the replication of narrative structure encourages us to see Ninnaji (imagined on the stage) as standing in for the other, bounded spaces of the narrative tradition (the palace, Chikubushima, etc.). The *nō* then actively conflates Nin-

naji with other spaces once Tsunemasa's ghost takes up the biwa: the mountains surrounding Ninnaji blend with Qin Ridge as his music blends with the sounds of nature. And although Tsunemasa's ghost seems to trigger this blending, it is accomplished for the audience through asking them to see the stage through *Wakan rōeishū* couplets from Chinese poems by Chinese poets about Chinese landscapes.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the nature of the mediating role played by the *Wakan rōeishū* in both works. A wholly Japanese production, the *Wakan rōeishū* is a celebration of a broader tradition of poetry reaching out to the continent and to the continental forms used by Japanese poets. But it does not trace a chronological lineage from China to Japan: rather, it is arranged by topic, and poems in both languages and forms intermingle in ways intended to add depth and breadth to one another, similar to the format of other Japanese poetry anthologies. The layering of spaces in both *Kaidōki* and *Tsunemasa* are made richer when seen this very way: significant spaces take on fresh meanings as they become incarnations of other, imagined spaces. Indeed, the *Wakan rōeishū* was intended not only to be heard but also seen. It is represented in gorgeous manuscripts dating back to the eleventh century and excerpted on equally elegant screens that would be placed in prominent locations in aristocratic homes. The text is at once visual and aural, and in both aspects it is about juxtapositions of languages and forms that are embodied by discrete poems that interpenetrate and reinterpret each other. It creates a context where temporality is deemphasized, and spatial (and cultural) borders become sites for contact, overlap, augmentation, and consonance, a concern very clearly represented in *Tsunemasa*, a play equally marked by aural/visual contexts.

So, what is the significance of the *Wakan rōeishū* as an interpretive model for *Kaidōki* and *Tsunemasa*, and what can it tell us about medieval Japan on the medieval globe? In the case of *Kaidōki*, the narrative throughout suggests a level of discomfort with closure and a reluctance to describe Kamakura as a wholly domestic, prosaic site. Given that the narrator clearly had the Jōkyū uprising in mind when he wrote the text, the hyperbole and the borrowed images from *Wakan rōeishū* poems can be read as a means of creating distance, while the layering of imagined landscapes also emphasizes the threatening meaning of the *bakufu*, from which the narrator abruptly departs soon after his arrival. The Chinese/domestic pairing becomes a template for juxtaposing conflicting responses to a new, uncomfortable domestic space.

We cannot pin down such a particular historical referent to which *Tsunemasa* might be a response, but its reliance on the *Wakan rōeishū* works similarly to that of *Kaidōki*, suggesting interpretations for the play that can add depth to previous understandings of it. Specifically, *Tsunemasa*'s engagement with the *Wakan rōeishū* undermines linear narrative and emphasizes spatial dimensions on a metatheatrical level, creating a polysemic mapping of a politically and culturally

significant central locale. In contrast to Kamakura in 1223, Ninnaji in Yoshimitsu's time was a long-standing marker of imperial and Buddhist authority. It represented order, but in a capital city—and as representative of a monarchy—where that order had been profoundly questioned. In this context, what the space of Ninnaji represented—and whether, like Kamakura, its authority was real or, like the *shite* on the stage, apparitional—are matters that remain in question. In both texts, politically charged locations of variable meaning are thus articulated through a spatial idiom. The layering of foreign and domestic spaces is at once enabled by allusion to poems from the *Wakan rōeishu* and evocative of the structure of that text: spaces are brought into conversation with each other, the Chinese and the Japanese comprising a shared unit.

It is also important to emphasize the way that Ninnaji is demarcated as a space in *Tsunemasa*. Represented on the stage, Ninnaji is bordered by Narabigaoka and Mount Kinugasa and evokes other bounded spaces: the imperial palace, the Chinese imperial palace, Chikubushima, or Penglai. This is true of Kamakura as described in *Kaidōki* as well: Yangzhou and Sojoun are similarly places with clear peripheries, as is the shogunal residence within the capital. Yet in both works, these borders do not mark the boundary between contiguous spaces, and certainly not between domestic and foreign. Rather, “foreign” landscapes provide the language through which domestic ones can take form. This unique relationship between domestic spaces with ambiguous meaning and foreign spaces with very specific connotations suggest the *Wakan rōeishū*'s allusive value for medieval works like *Kaidōki* and *Tsunemasa*. There is a clear sense of the Other to which domestic sites can be compared, but that Other is not a physical neighbor but rather a stable, if wholly imaginary, version of domestic spaces. The Other amplifies a domestic site's meaning, the poetic Chinese antecedent imbuing the physical domestic site with specific meanings that in turn make those spaces more “real.” *Wakan rōeishū*, both in content and form, thus serves as a unique tool for “mapping” in these medieval Japanese works. The map it enables in *Kaidōki* and *Tsunemasa* emphasizes not lateral relations, but vertical ones: “Chinese” couplets and *kanshi* reinforce, or even create, wholeness for description of the “Japanese” domestic terrain they are used to describe.

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Elizabeth Oyler (eaoyler@illinois.edu) is Associate Professor of Japanese in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her research focuses on medieval Japanese narrative and drama.

Abstract This essay explores how the poetry collection *Wakan rōeishū* becomes an important allusive referent for two medieval Japanese works, the travelogue *Kaidōki* and the nō play *Tsunemasa*. In particular, it focuses on how Chinese poems from the collection become the means for describing Japanese spaces and their links to power, in the context of a changing political landscape.

Keywords Japan, nō drama, Kamakura period, Muromachi period, travel narratives, *Wakan rōeishū*.

TILTING TOWARD THE LIGHT: TRANSLATING THE MEDIEVAL WORLD ON THE MING-MONGOLIAN FRONTIER

CARLA NAPPI

I.

We are the commoners, by decree of Heaven born in the empire of the Mongol qaghan.¹

Wang Zilong 王子龍 was tired and his hand was cramping. He looked up from the letter and hoped not to die or otherwise embarrass himself the following day.²

We have lived this way since the days of our ancestors to the time of our own people, from generation to generation. Although there have been difficult times, our commitment has remained the same. We have been determined to follow our sovereign and to serve him to the best of our ability.

It was hard work to translate from Mongolian into Chinese, and Wang had been struggling through the night. It was now March of 1608, and there was no guarantee that this fourteenth-century text would be adequate preparation for dealing with the envoys who awaited him at the border. Wang had come to the Translators' College (*Siyi guan* 四夷館)³ only four years earlier, earning a place at the Mongolian Bureau (*Dada guan* 鞑靼館) after an examination on a hot July day. He had been an exemplary student, rising quickly through the ranks of his fellow student-translators and distinguishing himself as a promising mediator between the Chinese and Mongolian written records. By 1607, he had been promoted to the rank of a Salaried Student (*shiliang zidi* 食糧子弟) at the Hanlin Academy, a prestigious institution for scholar-officials.⁴

1 Here and below, the text from which these quotations are derived is the *Hua Yi yiyu* (1918), 2:1a–13b. Translations from the Mongolian are my own, but were made in consultation with Mostaert, de Rachewiltz, and Schönbaum, *Le Matériel mongol*.

2 This is my own reconstruction of the scene.

3 The central character in name of the *Siyi guan* was changed from “barbarian” (*yi* 夷) to “translation” (*yi* 譯) when the Manchu Qing took control in 1644.

4 By some accounts, his performance at the Bureau was so impressive that he was given

We find Wang here in the following year, waiting to travel to Xifeng kou 喜峰口, a border station along the Great Wall in Hebei province that served as an important military checkpoint. Later, in the Qing era, a traveler would relate the experience of passing through Xifeng kou with mixed admiration and frustration. After an ascent through sloping hills covered with “beautiful long grass and dotted with yews, walnuts, chestnuts, and willows,” one would get to the thirty-foot-tall section of the Great Wall, which at that point was built of seven or eight feet of granite blocks topped with fifty-five layers of four-inch bricks. After reaching the pass, one apparently had to wrangle with officials who rudely demanded to see a traveler’s passports before proceeding to take an “extraordinary amount of trouble” to copy them.⁵ Back in the early seventeenth century, Wang was preparing to be one of the group of officials stationed at the pass to meet Mongol envoys coming to the territory of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) from the north; the envoys were obliged to pass through the station in order to secure formal entry into the empire. Cheng Jiugao 成九皋, the official who had previously been in charge of meeting envoys at the border station, had just retired. Given the importance of Xifeng kou to Ming-Mongol relations, it was important that Cheng be replaced, and thus a new official was needed to go to the border station to meet envoys bringing tribute. One translator official from the Mongolian Bureau was offered the position and refused to accept it: Lin Zhou 林洲 didn’t leave much of a trace in later historical documents after declining to accept this responsibility, and not much is known about him as a result. Wang had been offered the opportunity to go to Xifeng kou in Lin’s stead and he accepted the invitation.⁶

Here he was, then, reading over a Mongolian letter and copying the text to practice his translation work, in preparation for his post at the border. Practically speaking, it’s unclear how useful this practice would have been: the letter had been written more than two centuries before and was collected as part of a documentary reader that was made available to Chinese-Mongolian translators

an early exam in 1606 by imperial favor—this would have been a year earlier than was typical—and then earned a salary and a promotion along with a passing grade. By other accounts, Wang passed the translation exam after the normal three years of study and was awarded a food allowance of one bushel of rice per month and a promotion. “Bushel” here is used to translate the Chinese *dan* unit of measure, the precise meaning of which varied: see Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 560.

5 Gill, *River of Golden Sand*, 67.

6 Wang’s acceptance was a wise move on his part: as a result of his work at the border station he was promoted to the rank and salary of a translator-official (*yizi guan* 譯字官), and he was exempted from the next exam.

working for the Ming court.⁷ In the course of his education in Changli county (in the northeastern part of today's Hebei province), Wang Zilong had probably read about some major historical figures, like Chinggis Qan's grandson Arigh Böke (1219–66).⁸ It is unlikely, however, that Wang had realized that the history of the previous dynasty would be so critical to his work as a Mongolian language translator for the Ming empire.⁹

Yesüder, prince and descendent of Arigh-Böke, and others revolted along with the Oirats, violently killed the qan and seizing the great seal.

Arigh-Böke was famous as a Mongol leader, having failed to prevail in a struggle with his brother Qubilai (1215–94) for succession of the Mongolian Empire in the early 1260s. Qubilai went on to become not just Qaghan, or Great Qan, but also first emperor of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). Both of them appeared throughout the official history of the dynasty, the *Yuan History* (*Yuanshi* 元史). In 1388, more than a century after his death, Arigh Böke's descendent had overthrown the descendent of the last emperor of the dynasty that his estranged brother Qubilai had founded. A Mongolian chieftain had then written a letter to the Ming emperor to tell him all about it.

This was the letter Wang was reading now. The Oirats were a northern forest-dwelling people who had been making trouble in the Mongolian documentary record from at least *The Secret History of the Mongols*, a thirteenth-century chronicle of Mongolian history focusing on the family of Chinggis Qan. In those pages, Qutuqa Beki (the leader of the Oirat during Chinggis's ascent) joined forces with a tribal leader of the Naiman, a powerful people living in the northwest, and together they attempted to conjure a magical rainstorm to defeat Chinggis and his troops. (Their conjuring backfired, dousing them and their Oirat and Naiman troops instead.)¹⁰ The Oirats had been integrated into the Mongol Empire by Chinggis's eldest son in the early thirteenth century, and though relations between the Oirats and Chinggisid Mongols became increasingly rocky as the Oirats became

⁷ The nature of this documentary reader will be explored in more detail below.

⁸ Arigh Böke (as A-li-bu-ge 阿里不哥) appears several times in the *Yuanshi*.

⁹ This is an educated conjecture: we don't know exactly what student-translators like Wang, working at the Translators' College described below, would have known about the work and training they were to undergo at the College before they arrived.

¹⁰ See de Rachewiltz, *Secret History*, 63–64. The account of this event differed across historical sources. Ming readers would likely not have had access to the *Secret History* account as I am using it here.

more powerful, as of the late fourteenth century they were still obliged to offer military service to the Mongols.

Now, we can read over Wang's shoulder and see the Oirats joining forces with Yesüder, a descendent of Chinggis's grandson Arigh-Böke, to take power from another Mongol leader. The leader that Yesüder and the Oirats had murdered was Toqus Temür, son of Toghan Temür, who had been the last emperor of the Yuan dynasty and the last Mongol leader who had occupied the throne before the Ming overthrew Yuan rule. After the father Toghan Temür was routed by Ming forces, his sons (including Toqus)—eventually deemed the “Northern Yuan”—claimed legitimacy in part by their holding of Chinese-language state seals.¹¹ Toqus Temür was soon attacked and defeated by Ming forces early in 1388, and he then lived as a refugee before being killed by Yesüder the following winter.

All of this history was buried in the very brief passage Wang was copying. Finally, he was introduced to the letter's author:

As they annihilated and destroyed the people, we deliberated, myself Nekelei, dignitaries, soldiers, and all the people, and we said to ourselves and to each other, “How can we stand here and allow such evil villains to destroy the people before our eyes?”

Nekelei (or, in Chinese, 捏怯来) was a Mongolian officer who had served and been loyal to the now-dispatched qan, Toqus Temür. Guessing that the Ming would be a more useful and lasting ally than Yesüder and the Oirats, now that their leader was defeated, Nekelei had written to the Hongwu Emperor (r. 1368–98), founding ruler of the Ming, to explain his position and to pledge his allegiance.

Since ancient times, people have faced the difficult choice: whether to flee to avoid the darkness, or stay and tilt toward the light and away from the darkness. The Ming Emperor, by decree of Heaven, has the wide and extensive mandate to have, without partiality, mercy and compassion for all peoples of the world as if they were his son. We thus conform to the intentions of Heaven, and declare our allegiance to the Emperor.

Nekelei was playing with words a little, here. The name of the dynasty to which he was pledging allegiance, “Ming 明,” means “brightness” or “light.” When claiming to stay and “tilt toward the light,” then, he was being clever and doubly proclaiming his obedience.¹²

11 On the “Northern Yuan” and the seals, see Atwood, *Encyclopedia* (especially on “Northern Yuan” and “Three Guards”), and Honda, “On the Genealogy.”

12 As described below, the letter was actually written in Mongolian with translations of

The letter concluded with a brief explanation of some logistical matters. Nekelei explained to the emperor that the letter would likely arrive before he would: he and his colleagues had stopped to graze their horses on the way to the Ming capital, given that it was a chilly time of year, but had sent colleagues ahead with the letter and a gift of nine geldings, to request an audience with the ruler. He then briefly thanked the emperor before signing off. The letter clearly worked. By 1389, Nekelei was one of three Mongolian chieftains (along with his colleagues La'usa and Siremün) who surrendered to the Ming court in the wake of the assassination of Toqus Temür, and he initially made out fairly well in the deal.¹³ He received a military commandery and was made a local leader in what is now Inner Mongolia, in recognition of his submission.¹⁴ He continued to correspond with his new ruler, writing to request grain for his soldiers and their families, and fabric to clothe them.¹⁵ He relayed his recent activities: among other demands, Prince Yan (the young man who would go on to become the Yongle emperor) had ordered him to report on the population of his commandery, and he did so. He was following the rules, feeding the officials he was asked to feed, outfitting their men for travel, clothing their families.

Despite this, Nekelei would be dead as a result of a colleague's conniving (if not at his hands) shortly thereafter. The comrades with whom Nekelei had surrendered to the Ming were jealous of his success. Siremün, one of the two who had vowed allegiance alongside Nekelei, was not given a command or official rank by the Ming, and was consequently under Nekelei's command. He sent his own letter to the Ming ruler.¹⁶ Siremün's letter was fairly straightforward: he wrote to report on travel orders he had received and of official documents that had been sent to him. Judging solely from his report to the Ming, he was prepared to continue to be obedient, and all was well. Ultimately dissatisfied with the way he was treated, however, the envious and power-hungry man decided to turn away from the Ming and from Nekelei's command shortly after declaring his allegiance to both. He qui-

individual terms given in Chinese. Here, "light" was rendered as the Mongolian *gegen* and translated in the document as the Chinese *ming* 明.

13 Serruys, "Dates," 422.

14 Serruys, "Chinese," 22. Nekelei's commandery was in what was (for Serruys) Wudan, and what is now the capital of Ongni'ud Banner. See also Serruys, *Sino-Mongol Relations*, 3–18, on Mongol and Jurchen commanderies in the Ming.

15 *Hua Yi yiyu* (1918), 2b:14a–19a (second letter from Nekelei).

16 *Ibid.*, 2b:7b–10a (letter from Siremün). According to Serruys ("Dates," 425), Siremün's letter was likely sent in August or September of 1389. This would have been sent after Nekelei's first letter of 1388 and second letter of 1389.

etly got in touch with a local friend and attacked Nekelei on his own turf.¹⁷ Nekelei fled. . . Right into the territory of an ally of Yesüder, whose revolt had prompted Nekelei's avowal of obeisance to the Ming in the first place. The Mongolian chieftain and new Ming subject was consequently murdered at the hands of Yesüder's ally.

Much of this story is scattered across the documents in the *Hua Yi yiyu* 華夷譯語, the text that we have been reading along with Wang. Compiled in the middle of the reign of the first Ming emperor, the *Hua Yi yiyu* comprised a topically organized Mongolian-Chinese glossary and twelve additional Mongolian documents, including the letters of Nekelei and Siremün described above, accompanied by varying levels of Chinese translation, from a mere interlinear Chinese rendering of individual Mongolian terms, to a full Chinese translation at the end of each full statement.¹⁸ The genesis of the *Hua Yi yiyu* in its early Ming context is partially documented. The preceding Yuan dynasty had been part of—or considered equivalent to—the larger Mongol empire, whose official language was Mongolian. When the Yuan dynasty fell, the new Ming ruler reinstituted Chinese as the official language of the empire. However, that left the issue of how to deal with the copious documents and ongoing communication in the previous imperial language. On top of this, there were ongoing clashes on the northeastern frontier that made it vital for the Ming to continue to train diplomats and interpreters in Mongolian speech and writing.

The studious Wang Zilong, anxious about passing his exam in 1608, was therefore an aspiring heir to this long tradition. It had begun with a man named Qonici. The Mongolian Qonici was made an official at the elite Hanlin Academy in 1376, eight years after the consolidation of Ming rule. The members of this prestigious central government agency served as imperial advisors and tutors, supervised the civil examinations, and played prominent roles in large-scale scholarly projects. By 1382, Qonici had received a promotion at the Academy and sinicized his Mongolian name to Huo Yuanjie 火源潔.¹⁹ He had been working with a fellow Hanlin compiler named Ma-sha-i-hei Ma-ha-ma 馬沙亦黑馬哈馬 on a bilingual edition of *The Secret History of the Mongols*, and now the emperor had a new job for them: compile a Sino-Mongolian dictionary, transcribed entirely in Chinese

¹⁷ *Hua Yi yiyu* (1918), 2a:17a–23a (rescript to the Board of Rites to be forwarded to Yingchang wei) contains instructions to Nekelei for how to deal with Siremün.

¹⁸ For a description of the contents, see Serruys, "Dates." See also Haenisch, *Sino-mongolische Dokumente*; Haenisch, *Sinomongolische Glossare*; Lewicki, *La Langue mongole*; and Mostaert, de Rachewiltz, and Schönbaum, *Le matériel mongol*.

¹⁹ At first he adopted the Chinese name Huo Zhuang 霍莊, later switching to Huo Yuanjie with characters that could be written 火源潔 or 火原潔.

characters.²⁰ This way, even if readers could not understand Mongolian script, they could still sound out the Mongolian words by reading the Chinese transcription.

To do this, Huo and his collaborator(s) devised a system that used small graphs as pronunciation aids for sounds in Ming Mongolian that weren't perfectly represented by existing Chinese characters. According to this system, a handful of Chinese characters were written in small script and placed alongside or beneath Chinese terms in the text to show readers how to alter their pronunciation of those Chinese terms in order to help them more exactly recreate the sounds of Mongolian. If a translator or a student of Mongolian language was trying to pronounce these Chinese characters in a Mongolian way, then he had directions for how to shape his mouth, when to touch his palate, and how to map his tongue so that he could visualize the words coming off specific places on its surface. The meaning or appearance of these small symbols reminded him what to do. A small graph for "inside" (*zhong* 中) placed next to a character told him to make the corresponding sound inside his throat instead of at the front of his mouth.²¹ Thus *ha* 合 became *qa* and *hu* 忽 became *qu*. A small tongue (*she* 舌) placed alongside a term told him to read the corresponding character by trilling the tip of his tongue. Thus, *er* 兒 – *li* 里 – *la* 刺 – *lu* 魯 – *lun* 倫 would become *rr-ri-ra-ru-run*. When he saw a small graph beside a character that resembled something reaching up to touch a line on top (*ding* 丁), he knew to pronounce it by using the tip of his tongue to touch the top of his palate at the end of the word. Instead of *wen* 溫 he said *wel*. Instead of *wu* 兀 he said *wul*. And so on. This system was explained in the preface to the resulting text, the *Hua Yi yiyu*, which was completed in 1388 and printed in 1389.²²

20 Very little is known about this Ma-sha-i-hei Ma-ha-ma, who was not credited as an author in the final version of the text. For this account of the creation of the *Hua Yi yiyu*, including its relation to the *Secret History* (or, *Yuan bishi* 元秘史), see Lü, *Siyi guan ze*, 41. The earliest known edition of the *Secret History* is a Chinese transcription of the Mongolian text, and later editions reconstruct the Mongolian from the unique transcription system of the Chinese version, which used variously sized Chinese characters in sophisticated ways, including as diacritic markers, to indicate Mongolian sounds. Compilers consulted the *Secret History* for reference, but it is not entirely clear how they chose the vocabulary for the glossaries, or the documents for the reader. On the history of the *Hua Yi yiyu* as a didactic work, see de Rachewiltz, *Secret History*, 1:xliv–xlvii.

21 These are the directions given in the Chinese text that I describe. The directions that a Mongolian language learner would receive now would look quite different.

22 See *fanli* 凡例, in *Hua Yi yiyu* (1918), 1:4a–4b. This transcription system is also described in Hung, "Transmission," 454–61. *The Secret History of the Mongols* was reportedly the basis for the vocabulary included in the *Hua Yi yiyu* glossary. There is some debate over which text featured the special transcription system first. For comparisons between the systems for transcribing Mongolian words in the *Secret History* and the *Hua Yi yiyu*, see Chen, *Chen Yuan*, 2:104–36.

By the time a translation student like Wang Zongzai encountered the *Hua Yi yiyu* documents in the early seventeenth century—documents that included the letter by Nekelei—the text had become the prototype for many of the pedagogical materials used at their College and at its sister organization, the Interpreters' Station (*Huitong guan* 會同館), which was devoted to oral communication and the hosting of foreign envoys. The original version of this text (comprising both the glossary and the primer of documents) was available and used only Chinese characters; so was a later version of the text that included Mongolian script. The structure and categories of both the glossary and document collection (the main components of the *Hua Yi yiyu*) had become models for similar manuals used at most of the language bureaus at the College. Many of the glossaries produced by the College preserved the phrase *yiyu* 譯語 ("translated terms," indicating a foreign-language glossary) in their titles. These glossaries organized terms according to what was largely the same framework that had been used in the *Hua Yi yiyu* glossary: thus, they mined the compilers' memories and official documents for the key ideas (usually expressed in a word or two) that fit into the required conceptual grid: Heavenly Bodies and Phenomena; Precious Objects; Human Affairs; Geography and the Land; Writing and Records; Types of People; Buildings; The Human Body; Directions; Numbers and Counting; Birds and Beasts; Flowers and Trees; Tools and Implements; Cloth and Clothing; Colors; Food and Drink; and Time and Calendrics. A section for Commonly Used Terms functioned as a miscellaneous grab bag of words that didn't fit elsewhere. There were other categories included in other bureaus' glossaries—the Tibetan instructors had added a section for Aromatic Drugs and one for Classical/Religious Terminology. Not all of the categories existed in all of the glossaries, and their order varied, but for the most part this was the expected map of important foreign knowledge as embodied in its envoys and instantiated in official documents.²³

There were also glossaries for the Interpreters' Station, geared toward assisting interpreters in learning the vocabulary that was vital to helping them carry out their duties at the station. Being intended for spoken conversation, they only included Chinese transliterations of foreign terms, without foreign scripts.²⁴

23 Some of the category names varied slightly in the glossaries. In addition, the Sanskrit glossaries that I have seen are not at all like this, and in fact they are not properly glossaries at all, but sutras in a Sanskrit script with one- or two-character Chinese transcriptions next to each Sanskrit letter. Semantically arranged dictionaries organized in similar categories had a long precedent in the Chinese language. See the discussion of orthographic classification focusing largely on the *Shuowen jiezi* (completed c. 100 CE) in Bottéro, *Sémantisme et classification*.

24 See the Chaoxian glossary from the Awa no Kuni collection for prefatory remarks on the

They were typically organized according to the same categories as the Translators' College texts, though some editions contain additional rubrics. One Korean glossary, for example, contained a section for the names of the heavenly stems and earthly branches, and one for the names of diagrams from the *Classic of Changes*, an ancient divination text.²⁵ Judging from the terms and phrases included in the Station glossaries, interpreters had many kinds of interactions with visiting merchants and envoys. They commented on travel conditions and the state of the roads and buildings of the capital and its environs, and were well armed with phrases that described the conditions of rivers and directions for fording them, crossing bridges, traveling along roads, using wells, and negotiating city walls. They spoke of the various stages of the night watch, the times of the day and the year, and they commented on changes in the seasons. They learned the names for flowers, plants, trees, animals, and foodstuffs that would typically come up in conversation with foreign envoys: not just lice and butterflies, but also glowworms and mad dogs and silver-haired horses. In the glossaries for Mongol and Jurchen languages, this could include many names for different varieties of horses, signaling the importance of the animals for trade with those groups. They learned how to instruct newly arrived envoys on the proper etiquette for inhabiting households in the capital: no running around, for example, and no burning the doors and windows down.²⁶ They learned the terms for instruments used for cooking, playing music, and maintaining horses and livestock; terms for madmen, scarred men, beltmakers, hatmakers, and idiots, hunchbacks, tanners, and people with hare-

whole series of thirteen glossaries, based on an edition compiled by Mao Ruizheng (*jinshi* 1601; fl. 1597–1636, *zi* Bofu), who had written the *Huang Ming xiangxu lu* (1629), a treatise on tribute states of the Ming, and other texts on military and foreign relations. The edition also included a preface by Zhu Zhifan (1564–?, *jinshi* 1595 [optimus]), a senior official in the Hanlin Academy who was famed for his calligraphy. Zhu had been sent as an envoy to Korea in 1605, perhaps explaining why his preface to the work appeared at the beginning of the Korean glossary. The glossaries included in the Awa no Kuni collection are Korean (Chaoxian), Ryukyu (Liuqiu), Japanese (Ribei), Vietnamese (Annan), Champa (Zhancheng), Siamese (Xianluo), Mongolian (Dazu), Uighur (Weiwuer), Tibetan (Xifan), Persian (Huihui), Malacca (Manlajia), Jurchen (Ruzhen), and Baiyi. The glossaries are Ming products, but more precise dating is unknown. See Davidson, “New Version.” Because some of these countries communicated in writing with the Ming using Chinese, they didn’t need script glossaries.

25 Huo, *Hua Yi yiyu*, Zhu Zhifan preface. This edition credits Huo with the translation and a Di Bofu with the compilation or editing. Di Bofu likely refers to Mao Ruizheng, whose *zi* or courtesy name was Bofu. The texts that I describe here are examples of a much broader landscape of conversation manuals and phrasebooks.

26 *Guanfang buxu zuojian* 官房不許作踐; *men chuang buxu shaohui* 門窗不許燒毀. See Kane, *Sino-Jurchen*, 244.

lips.²⁷ They learned how to talk about actions, from meditating to agreeing to sitting, including special terms for “not becoming a useful person,” asking in detail, requesting wine, and bringing in horses. They learned how to talk about body parts and things one could do with and to them, emotions, illnesses, and qualities of character. The nature of some of the phrases in these glossaries give us a sense that interpreters were not solely called upon to perform duties within the walls of the Station or even the capital: they were also sent to accompany envoys on their travels. Some interpreters’ glossaries included multi-word phrases under the rubric of “Human Affairs” that would ostensibly have been of use to foreign envoys staying at the hostel: “That’s ugly.” “I’m drunk!”²⁸ Thus the interpreters of Jurchen at the Station could consult the handbook for instructions on how to direct Jurchen-speaking envoys in practical matters for navigating the roads, chatting about the weather, and instructing envoys in matters of court etiquette.²⁹

By Wang’s time, the Mongolian Bureau still continued to use the *Hua Yi yiyu* glossary, transcribed into both Chinese and Mongolian scripts and supplemented by additional terms and addenda that had been accreted to the text in the years since Huo compiled it. The documentary collection in the *Hua Yi yiyu* was also adapted into similar collections of paired documents (each pair consisting of a document in a foreign language specific to the particular bureau charged with translating its documentary script, along with a Chinese version) that were known as *laiwen* 來文. Together, these documents functioned as a reader of primary source texts for use by students and translators who were studying the craft of reading and rendering diplomatic language between Chinese and the other languages of the College.

2.

The Translators’ College had been founded by the Yongle Emperor (r. 1402–24) in 1407, immediately after the admiral Zheng He (1371–1433) had returned from the first voyage of his “treasure fleet” after setting out two years earlier. The College served as the official government body responsible for translation in the Ming capital.³⁰ When Yongle founded the College, there were eight bureaus

27 The “People” (*ren*) category of Interpreters’ glossaries could be exceptionally diverse. The examples given here are all taken from the *ren* section of a single glossary.

28 These examples can be found in the Human Affairs (*renshi*) section of the Ryukyu (*Liuqiu*) glossary from the Guiting chubanshe edition of the *Hua Yi yiyu*, 94. Many more cases are included in the many Interpreters’ glossaries. There are several examples from the Awa no Kuni Bunko glossaries.

29 For specific examples of these kinds of phrases, see Nappi, “Full. Empty. Stop. Go.”

30 Though the extant literature on the Interpreters’ Station (*Huitong guan*) and Trans-

devoted to a range of languages crucial for diplomatic communication between the Ming empire and states that did not use Chinese script for written communication. The Mongolian (*dada* 韃靼) Bureau handled diplomatic exchange between the Ming court and any state officials or others who preferred to use the Mongolian language in written communication. The Jurchen (*ruzhen* 女真) Bureau was established to translate between Chinese and an Altaic language that had become politically crucial in the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234) when North China was under Jurchen rule.³¹ The Muslim (*huihui* 回回) Bureau handled texts from areas that were known to practice Islam and that submitted documents in *huihui* script. (The glossaries were in Persian, but the term *huihui* could also indicate Arabic.) A wide territory fell under its jurisdiction: Samarkand, Arabia, Turfan, Champa, Java, Cambodia, Malacca, and, remarkably, Japan.³² There was a Tibetan (*xifan* 西番) Bureau, responsible for literary and diplomatic texts written in headless *dbu-med* script, which were often brought by Lamas; a Gaochang (*gaochang* 高昌) Bureau, responsible for texts in Uighur script that came into the Ming from across central Asia; a Baiyi (*baiyi* 百夷) Bureau that covered many polities and subprefectures around what is now Yunnan; and a Burma (*miandan* 緬甸) Bureau. The Sanskrit (*xitian* 西天) Bureau produced and translated sutras and other classic literature, and its extant “glossaries” were not glossaries at all. In principle, the officials of this bureau were also responsible for written communication with India.³³ In addition

lators’ College (*Siyi guan*) largely maintains that they were separate institutions producing separate glossaries, the extent of their separation from 1407 to 1748 is not at all clear from the surviving glossaries.

31 By the late sixteenth century, this bureau seems to have been an extinct or at least defunct part of the College: throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Jurchen people preferred to write and read Mongolian, even while they spoke Jurchen.

32 Wang, *Siyi guan kao*, 10b–22b. In the 1695 Qing version of the *Siyi guan kao* by Jiang Fan, *Huihui* was added as an additional region administered by the Muslim bureau. See Jiang, *Siyi guan kao*. Classification under the Muslim bureau would have meant that Japan was sending Persian documents to China for official communication. On views of Japan in early modern China, see Fogel, *Sagacious Monks*. The essays in Part I, “Ming to Early Qing,” are especially pertinent, though I find no mention of a perceived Japanese-Muslim identity mentioned there.

33 See note 24, above. The Sanskrit Bureau seemed to be a problem for the College. According to a popular story, in the early days of the College, one Qin Junchu (1385–1441) faked his way through the imperial exams and into a position as Sanskrit Bureau translator by memorizing or sneaking a copy of a sutra into the exam, copying it out in Sanskrit, and attaching it to the end of his exam paper. His deceit wasn’t discovered until a century after his death, when instructors at the Bureau wanted to compile a glossary like that of their peers and had no model. They consulted the “*Hua Yi yiyu*” compiled by Qin during his days

to the eight original bureaus founded by Yongle in 1407, a ninth bureau devoted to Babai (*babai* 八百), a script used in Yunnan, was added in 1511. A tenth bureau for the language of Siam (*xianluo* 暹羅) was added in 1578. Each was charged with translating a particular foreign script to and from Chinese, training students and officials in the relevant language, and creating written materials as study aids and to facilitate translation between the script and Chinese.

The original Translators' College founded by Yongle had been under the jurisdiction of the Hanlin Academy, but it wasn't located anywhere near that prestigious institution: instead, the College occupied twenty rooms just outside the eastern stone wall of the city (*Dong'an shimen*).³⁴ Thirty-eight students were chosen from the Imperial Academy (*Guozijian*, an institution separate from the Hanlin that prepared students for positions in the imperial bureaucracy) to study in what was or soon became, by all accounts, a rather dilapidated bunch of leaky rooms. The court later approved renovations and in 1542 allowed the College to move closer to the center of the imperial action, just outside the eastern entrance to the Forbidden City and a stone's throw from the Academy itself.

Students came to the College through many routes. Though language students at the College originally were drawn from the Imperial Academy, scholars could later test into the College by examination, and many managed to buy or bribe their way in. By the late sixteenth century, positions at the College had largely become hereditary: when an instructor died, his son often took over his job. This option was implemented after several directors of the College complained about the quality of the students who were securing places through examination or bribery. According to these complaints, the classrooms were full of rich boys who had neither the aptitude for learning nor an interest in studying the languages to which they were assigned.³⁵ The entrance examinations were irrelevant to the work the men actually did upon enrolling in the College, and these privileged sons of wealthy officials were threatening to undermine the work of the entire institution. After one particularly strident complaint from a College director in the sixteenth century, the court implemented the director's suggestion that a new set of students should be chosen from among the blood relations of the current College

teaching at the Bureau, expecting it to contain translations of pertinent terms and ideas like the other glossaries, and found only a recopying of a Buddhist sutra, the *Manjusri-Nama-Samgiti* (Chanting of the Names of Manjusri).

34 Lü, *Siyi guan ze*, 42. See Crossley, "Structure and Symbol," 45, on the condition of the bureau buildings. For more on the College and Bureau, see also Pelliot, "Le Hoja."

35 For the full text of the 1566 memorial sent by Director Xu Jie (1494–1574) to the Jiajing emperor (r. 1521–67), along with a commentary by Gao Gong, who at that time had just become president of the Board of Rites, see Lü, *Siyi guan ze*, 193–97.

translators. Students were typically examined every three years, at which point they either failed (and could retake the test twice more during the regular three-year cycle before being ejected from the College) or were rewarded with a promotion. After three of these tests, or nine years of training, a student was qualified as an instructor.

Wang Zilong had taken this latter route of entry into the College: after growing up in the northeastern part of the Ming empire, by 1604 he had decided to become a translator for the Ming. (We don't know why he would have decided this, but it was not unusual for translators at the Mongolian Bureau to come from that region of the northeast). In July of that year he passed an entrance examination and earned a position as student and resident of the Mongolian Bureau. As described above, Wang rapidly distinguished himself as a promising mediator between the Chinese and Mongolian scriptural worlds. Though he doesn't seem to have had family with him at the Mongolian Bureau, among the sixty-two colleagues who passed the 1607 exam the same year he did, there seem to have been at least two pairs of brothers.³⁶

Though positions at the College were neither glamorous nor terribly prestigious, the facilities were in constant need of repair, and there was little cash available to do anything about it, it wasn't entirely a bad situation. Students were housed and clothed, and received a modest salary, with their transportation to the College paid and their tax burdens sometimes forgiven. As they passed their examinations and were promoted, their allowances and salaries went up as well. As long as they were actively studying and not sick or otherwise absent, they received salaries of silver, cash, fuel, and silk according to rank—and even absent students found ways to claim their allowances anyway.³⁷

Since its founding in the early fifteenth century, the Mongolian Bureau remained one of the most important arms of the College. Not only did relations between the Ming and Mongol groups along its borders remain fraught well into the history of the Ming empire, but a diplomatic and cultural knowledge of Mongols was also useful for relations with the Mongolian-speaking people who lived and served in Ming territory in military and other capacities. As a written language, Mongolian was used by many non-Ming people in their communication with the empire. Not only many self-identified Mongolians, but also Jurchens used

36 Many of the students seem to have been related; personnel records for many of the bureaus often indicate groups of two to four students from the same area with the same surname and similar given names being admitted to the roster of a particular language bureau at the same time.

37 For a brief description of this, see Wild, "Materials," 632–34.

the script for written communication. It was a kind of diplomatic *scripta franca* in constant use throughout Ming rule. Recruiting personnel who had some knowledge of Mongolian language and script thus continued to be crucial for the Ming court well after their defeat of the Yuan in the fourteenth century.³⁸

One of the reasons the script continued to be so widely used was the continuing trouble that brewed in Ming-Mongolian relations. As noted above, the Ming had come to power after defeating the Mongol Yuan dynasty in the fourteenth century, and the complex relations between the Ming empire and various groups of Mongols along its borders have been well documented. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Ming reinvigorated its staffing of translators and students at the Mongolian Bureau: eight translators joined the Bureau in 1566, two more men in 1578, and fifteen men in 1604, all from the northern part of the Ming empire. This was an unusually large staff for any single College bureau and signaled the importance of Mongolian as a diplomatic language for the Ming. Crucially, however, language training was not the only kind of education that pedagogical language materials were being used to inculcate in the students and translators who used them.

3.

Language education for a Ming translator in the early seventeenth century was also a kind of history education. Whether or not they were aware of it, Mongolian student-translators like Wang Zilong were learning a particular version of the history of the Mongols and the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) as they worked through their vocabulary and grammar lessons. The small compendium of documents selected for inclusion in the Mongolian *Hua Yi yiyu* included a modest range of the kinds of textual forms that a translator who was rendering diplomatic documents to and from Chinese and Mongolian for the Ming court might encounter. Some, like the letter from Nekelei discussed above, took the form of requests or updates written to the throne. Others took the format of edicts, diplomas, or rescripts, all dating from 1384 to 1389. Full or abbreviated Chinese versions of some of them appear in the Ming Veritable Records (*Ming Shilu* 明實錄), a historical record of each Ming ruler's reign compiled after his death and based on archival documents. The origin of others is unclear.

These texts collectively mapped out a particular route through the historical terrain of the Yuan period and the genealogies of Mongol rule. They inculcated the reader into a particular vision of what Mongolian history and foreign relations had looked like prior to the Ming, a vision of history that emphasized particular

³⁸ See Robinson, "Images," 69–70.

aspects of Mongolian and Yuan pasts. Several common themes emerge from a close reading of these twelve *Hua Yi yiyu* documents. One important theme was the special importance of Buddhism (and Tibetan Buddhism specifically) to Ming-Mongol relations. The second document in the collection, a 1389 rescript sent to a Tibetan monk, exemplifies this.³⁹ The monk had refused to fight in northern resistance against Ming rule, choosing instead to retreat to a temple to study and propagate Buddhist doctrine. The document situates the monk within the larger historical context of the western origin of Buddhism and its spread eastward. In the document, the monk is given permission to stay where he is and is exempted from making tribute or tax payments to the Ming, ostensibly at least in part as a reward for his previous refusal to fight Ming rule.

The fact that this document was chosen for inclusion in the *Hua Yi yiyu* reader signals that the compilers (and later, instructors who used the text for pedagogical purposes) identified Tibetan Buddhism as a socio-political force that was important for Mongolian-Chinese translators to be aware of, and one that was likely to recur in future documentary correspondence that would need translating. The specific vision of Tibetan Buddhist practice offered here presents it as a realm that was associated with protesting Mongols while not necessarily following the same political or diplomatic path. It presents a snapshot of a vision of Tibetan Buddhist society that could potentially be allied with, or at least not run contrary to, Ming interests.

Another common element across the *Hua Yi yiyu* documents was a tendency to depict Mongolian history prior to the Ming in terms of a genealogy of rulers whose shared Mongolian past extended from the birth of Chinggis Qan through to the events that were under discussion in the document at hand.⁴⁰ The documents collectively created a transhistorical category of “Mongols” by charting a lineage that was anchored in a few key figures. One letter accuses Toghan Temür, the last Yuan emperor (who fled the capital as Ming forces overtook it), of neglecting his duties and ultimately bringing about the fall of the Yuan dynasty. The figure to whom the letter was addressed, A-zha-shi-li 阿札失里 (or Ajasiri), was urged to consider himself and his family as part of this longer Mongolian history that extended through the Yuan and was punctuated by the career of Toghan Temür, and was in turn part of a larger history of ruling families in and across the empire. According to the narrative emerging from these documents, the success of a Mongol leader depended on the affection he showed or withheld from the people he was charged

³⁹ *Hua Yi yiyu* (1918), 2a:8a–12a (Rescript to monk Rinchen bZangpo).

⁴⁰ See, for example, *Hua Yi yiyu* (1918), 2a:24a–28b (Rescript to the Board of Rites to be forwarded to Anda Naghacu), and 2b:5a–7a (Letter from Torghocar).

with leading. The letters often invoke examples of effective and ineffective leadership, with Toghan Temür as the paradigmatic case of the latter.⁴¹ Understood collectively as a kind of historical account, these letters provided a way of periodizing Mongol genealogy in terms of its relation to the Ming, often based on cycles of benevolent rule.⁴² According to another letter, the history of the Mongols could be traced as a genealogy of benevolence to a deserving people, and of submission to a more potentially benevolent ruler by unkind leaders. The availability of a moral education, and of a way to ensure moral leadership, was also at issue for the history that was transmitted to translators.

Probably the most common historical theme in the *Hua Yi yiyu* documents is a recurring discussion of the submission of local Mongol leaders and their followers to Ming rule. Many of the documents were the products of recent submissions, functioned as the written technologies by which submissions occurred, or invoked submissions in the course of a narration that contextualized whatever matter was under discussion in the document at hand. Tales of obedient submission were occasionally contrasted with reports of Mongol “bandits” who had been engaged in some sort of combat. (“Bandits,” a derogatory term as used here, could refer to any number of people who refused to submit to Ming rule and took arms in protest).

This embedding of a historical education into language training was not limited to the student-translators at the Mongolian Bureau: most of the language bureaus at the College produced documentary *laiwen* collections that can be read as offering a particular perspective on the past and present of the regions that fell under the purview of each bureau and their relations with the Ming state.⁴³ However, because of its early date of compilation in the late fourteenth century and its

41 See *Hua Yi yiyu* (1918), 2a:24a–28b (Rescript to the Board of Rites to be forwarded to Anda Naghacu).

42 The use of history to forward an idea of government rooted in a benevolence-based statecraft was also a feature of Liu Sanwu’s preface to the *Hua Yi yiyu*. There, Liu provides an account of the history of the distinction between *Hua* and *Yi*, and justifies the need for translators, by invoking the kind of benevolence that comes from a moral education. The distinction between Chinese and barbarians (*yi*) had existed since antiquity, according to Liu. Despite the repeated efforts of a series of sages, that distinction could not be overcome, and this was due primarily to the differences in their spoken languages. If it was impossible to understand a man’s speech, one could not impart a moral education to him; expanded to the level of groups of men, this impossibility of rendering a moral education made it also impossible to ensure that their societies were properly ordered. This problem reached a particularly difficult point with the coming of Yuan rule.

43 In addition to the Mongolian Bureau *laiwen* collection, I have consulted *laiwen* collections from the Muslim, Jurchen, Siam, and Tibetan bureaus.

continued use thereafter, a reading of the Mongolian materials offers a particularly rich case of the continued use of language textbooks to transmit a particular vision of that world to early modern students.

Many questions emerge from this brief reading of Mongolian-Chinese translation documents with an eye to the broader historical sensibility that they made available to students of Mongolian language. We don't know how individual students like Wang Zilong read and understood these documents, or how the picture of Mongolian and Ming histories that they conveyed would have differed, if at all, from what the students had learned elsewhere. Still, at the very least, the narrative form taken by this history was notable and important: reading from a collection of individual, translated primary sources mostly associated with named authors is a very different experience from reading selections of a massive official history like the *Yuan History*. We also don't know the precise pedagogical context within which this text was embedded, or how students and instructors experienced it as part of a curriculum. It is unclear what other materials students at the College may have had available to supplement the history of the regions they studied.⁴⁴ We don't even know on what basis the compilers of the *Hua Yi yiyu* decided to include the documents they did, or (just as interestingly) what they purposefully left out.

Despite this ambiguity, though, the act of asking these kinds of questions about the materials of language learning and the technologies of translation in late medieval and early modern China is already a step toward integrating a very different range of textual materials than are usually at the forefront of discussion into the wider dialogue of global medieval and early modern historiography, including both the histories written by us and those written between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. Sometimes, it is only by asking the unanswerable questions that we are able to change the character of the discussion. By training our eyes to read translated Mongolian-Chinese materials as a kind of history, even if we don't ultimately see the answers we're looking for in these texts, perhaps this act of refocusing will help us see new phenomena when we return our new eyes to other materials in other contexts. Indeed, historical writing is itself always an act of translation, whether that translation is a movement between present and past, fragments and narratives, or materials and language.⁴⁵

44 Wang Zongzai, director of the College for four months in 1578, compiled a guidebook to the regions that were included under the purview of each language bureau. It is not clear, however, what the actual readership of his *Siyi guan kao* was and whether students at the College had access to it.

45 There is much more to be said on this topic. I thank Carol Symes for her inspiration in thinking about the connections between historians and translators in these terms.

4.

Though many of them left little or no named mark on the historical record, and it can be extraordinarily difficult to trace them or their histories, language students and translators like Wang Zilong helped shape the medieval and early modern worlds. From a perspective rooted in Ming history, these translators were responsible for mediating and facilitating the diplomatic, commercial, and other modes of communication from which something like a medieval or early modern globe emerged. We may not have access to the details of their days, and, in order to bring a student like Wang to life in these pages, we had to translate the translator across the realms of confirmable fact and probable conjecture. We may never know exactly how and when they used the documentary archive of materials associated with them. But as readers and translators today, we can at least get a sense of the epistemic landscape of foreign language pedagogy through a close reading of the materials available to students.

There is a much fuller story to tell of the spaces, texts, and practices of medieval and early modern translators of foreign languages within the Ming empire. That story begins by mapping a path through some of these pedagogical materials to facilitate a close reading of them as literature. Taking another look at documents that aren't typically described as "literary"—glossaries, textbooks, dictionaries, student worksheets—and reading them with an attentiveness to their artistry and capacity for storytelling opens up new ways of contextualizing and reading a history from them. It invites an approach to reading that is informed by the kind of sophistication we bring to studies of comparative literature and cultural history, rather than a narrow disciplinary approach that situates dictionaries within the field of lexicography, textbooks within the history of education, and so on. By considering textbooks as literature here, there emerges an understanding of one kind of purpose that foreign language texts like the *Hua Yi yiyu* served for readers who worked closely with them: for Ming translation students, Mongolian language learning was simultaneously an education in Mongolian history. We can provisionally extend this mode of reading, if not the conclusion, to other pedagogical materials at other College bureaus, or even potentially to language-learning contexts elsewhere in the medieval and early modern worlds. Much of the time, then as now, language learning was arguably about much more than just linguistic competence.

We can also take another lesson from this case. Though researching Chinese history depends on a mastery of Chinese texts, the Ming state was multilingual, and it is necessary to go beyond Chinese-language materials to understand the encounters of what we now define as "China" within medieval and early modern Eurasian networks. The people who speak to us from this documentary archive

of Chinese history were themselves translated across languages and context in their lifetimes. Nekelei, the Mongolian chieftain who turned toward the light of the Ming; Qonici, who became at least one and perhaps many other selves in Chinese; Wang Zilong, who both existed across languages and helped others do so as well—all of them are part of Chinese history and none of them existed comfortably solely in Chinese. In writing our histories of the medieval and early modern globes, we need to honor their itinerancy and multiplicity, and be itinerant and multiple ourselves. Our labor and that of Ming translators, after all, is not all that different. Working amid what could be a bewildering range of differences—of terms, scripts, and concepts—Wang Zilong and his fellow Ming translators nonetheless used their tools to manufacture relationships that allowed them to weave coherent stories. They created samenesses between the qualities of men in foreign scripts and those in Chinese, between bodies and their actions in Mongolian texts, for example, and those in Chinese. Word by word, they invented equivalents through juxtapositions on the page, creating translated bestiaries, heavenly and urban landscapes, and histories (among much else). Modern historians also work to make historical and documentary relationships visible, to build bridges where there were none before, and to find ways to translate very different languages of discipline, document, and medium into a common conversation. Just as translation can create a form of history, so history is a kind of translation.

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Carla Nappi (carla.nappi@ubc.ca) is Associate Professor of History and Canada Research Chair in Early Modern Studies at the University of British Columbia. Her first book, *The Monkey and the Inkpot: Natural History and its Transformations in Early Modern China* (Harvard, 2009) was a study of belief-making in early modern Chinese natural history through the lens of the *Bencao gangmu* (1596), a compendium of *materia medica*. Her research currently focuses on problems of translation and materiality in China from the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries, and is resolving itself into a pair of books and a series of short experimental works in various verbal and audio storytelling media. She also spends a lot of time hosting two podcast channels devoted to interviews with authors of new books in East Asian studies and Science and Technology Studies. To find out more, you can explore her website at www.carlanappi.com.

Abstract Ming China maintained relationships with neighboring peoples such as the Mongols by educating bureaucrats trained to translate many different foreign languages. While the reference works these men used were designed to facilitate their work, they also conveyed a specific vision of the past and a taxonomy of cultural differences that constitute valuable historical sources in their own right, illuminating the worldview of the Chinese-Mongolian frontier.

Keywords Wang Zilong, Ming Dynasty, China, Mongol, Chinggis Qan, *Hua Yi yiyu*, Yuan Dynasty, translation, Mongolian language, *Siyi guan*, *Huitong guan*.